

T H E

FALSE FRIENDS.

A

N O V E L.

In a SERIES of LETTERS.

By the Author of the RING.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

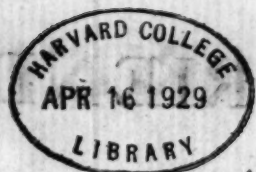
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T H E

FALSE FRIENDS.

A N O V E L.

LETTER LXVIII.

JOHN HERVEY, Esq. to LORD WESTON.

IT is impossible to express the pain your last gave me. Indeed, my friend, I could have pistoled myself for my folly, which I was not sensible of, till the receipt of yours; but let me hasten to give you all the consolation in my power.

Miss Watson has, with the consent of all her friends, dismissed Sir Henry Fortescue, and is gone to Southampton with Lady Catherine Worthy, to a house that lady has there.

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B

Sir

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Sir Henry, very much chagrined (though I hear he had previously determined to give her up, finding himself so much disliked by her) is preparing for a trip to his native country.

Your uncle has had a severe fit of the gout; I ventured to plead your cause, but found him inexorable. Time I hope will soften his displeasure, and make him relent. Do not let sweet hope forsake you; hope, the soother, the sweetener of all our cares. Hope carries us through the worst of troubles; therefore I again repeat, let not hope forsake your breast. Adieu, my friend, and believe me

Sincerely yours,

JOHN HERVEY.

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LETTER LXIX.

LADY WIMBLETON to Miss WATSON.

I Received my dear Eliza's short but welcome billet yesterday. In answer to your first question, we are all as well as when you and the good Lady Catherine left us. The second is, if Sir William and his sister are come? They are; they arrived the day after you set off for Southampton.

Miss Brooks is in high spirits, and declares herself enchanted with the gay scenes which surround her. I have introduced her to Lady Mary, who refuses to give her opinion yet. The lively Helen has taken a violent fancy to her, but whether Mary will take as violent a fancy to her is yet doubtful; your opinion, my dear, I already know, but must for the present differ from it. I long for another letter, and beg you will keep up

B 2

your

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your spirits and let nothing ruffle them. Sir Henry Fortescue has set off for Ireland to dissipate his chagrin (it is said) at *a certain young lady's* refusal of him. I saw Mr. Hervey yesterday at the exhibition, but he seemed more intent upon something in his own breast than on the beautiful collection around him. He asked me if I had heard from you? I answered in the negative, for I had not then received yours. Lady Mary bids me tell you she will write the latter end of the week. My lord sends his best wishes to his sweet sister, and Sir William, and Miss Brooks present respects. Farewel, my dear love, and assure yourself of the unalterable esteem of

Your affectionate sister,

A. WIMBLETON.

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LETTER LXX.

SIR WILLIAM BROOKS to A.

DINGLEY, Esq.

London.

I Will no longer delay writing to you, Dingley, though I have very little subject for amusement, but ere long, my lad, I trust I shall have something to relate worthy your perusal; let me, however, acquaint you that my sister and self are at present under the roof of the unsuspecting Wimbleton, and his no less unsuspecting wife. Pleasure at present seems our only pursuit; every thing must have time; I have a difficult part to play. Conscience will at times rise and cry, What are you about, would you ruin the wife of your friend? But what has friendship to do with love? I fear the most arduous task I shall have, will be to make Wimbleton jealous of his lady, as her

B 3

conduct

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conduct at present admits of no suspicion; neither is there one man who frequents the house to whom she shews more preference than another, and without some little clue I shall never be able to carry my point. All the men seem to admire her, but her behaviour is so uniform to all, it is impossible to find the least fault with it. However, I am far from being in despair, as my sister assures me she shall soon fix on some scheme that shall make the whole fabric shake. What she means I must own is beyond my comprehension, but am determined to trust to her guidance entirely.

There is a cousin of Lady Wimbleton's who is often here, Lady Mary Manly. She is very lovely, very accomplished, very gay, and very sensible. I like her much, but am cautioned by my sister to beware of her, what her reason is I know not. But as I verily believe, though she is my sister, her breast is a very pandæmonium

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monium, I am determined, I again repeat, to be ruled by her.

I had almost forgot to tell you that Lord Revel, whom I mentioned being at Bath, is now in town. We saw him last night at the opera, and Lord Wimbeldon having some slight acquaintance with, and finding we knew him, invited him home to supper. My sister was in high spirits, and just whispered when she was on the stairs going to her chamber, that Lord Revel coming just now was the best thing that could have happened for us. What she means I cannot possibly divine: I have not seen her yet this morning, but think I now hear her voice, therefore will finish this after breakfast.

Twelve o'Clock.

I am not much the wiser as she tells me her scheme is not yet ripe for execution. I will acquaint you with it as soon

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as I know it myself, till then you must
rest content.

Yours,

WILLIAM BROOKS.

I forgot to tell you Miss Watson is
gone to Southampton.

LETTER LXXI.

LADY MARY MANLY to Miss WATSON.

MY dear Eliza desires her sister to tell
me she longs for one of my lively
epistles, I accordingly am set down to
give you one of some sort, but would you
believe it! am quite at a loss for a subject.
News there is none, excepting politics,
which I think myself much too wise to
meddle with. The papers are filled with
the ins and outs, and the outs and ins;
with interspersed anecdotes of kept mis-
tresses.

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treffes. The men who are not in the army are studying how to raise taxes and distress poor England; whilst those who are, are considering what they shall do when reduced to half pay, to support mistresses, adorn their pretty persons, and gambling. You will call this an odd description, my dear, I dare say, but I verily think it a true one. My own sex I scarce dare speak of, as dress and dissipation seem to engross all their time. Their whole delight is to hear themselves praised by the fluttering coxcomb, who the instant he is out of sight, nay, sometimes only out of hearing, vilifies and debases the character of the very woman he but the moment before would have persuaded was more than mortal.

But methinks you cry, how long has my cousin been so reformed herself, as thus to condemn faults in others she so often commits herself? True, my dear, I stand convicted. A splenetic fit seized

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me,

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me, and I had recourse to my pen to vent it. You will forgive me I am sure, therefore will proceed to another subject.

I have seen Sir William and Miss Brooks several times, and will freely own to you I like neither. 'Tis true I was rather prejudiced against them from what I heard from you and Miss Talmafh. I observed the sister well, she appeared lively and agreeable, therefore deferred giving my opinion till a further acquaintance. She does not improve upon me, yet cannot find out any particular failing, unless I mention a too great propensity to flirtation. This you will say you have observed likewise. True, and so has my friend Ethelinda; but though I do not like, I appear very fond of her, as I should take no trouble about her, only think I may in some measure be of service to Lady Wimbleton, whom I verily believe the girl infatuates. I think,
but

but no matter, I am loath to say what I think, as I may be wrong.

Your sister is quite pleased at the seeming fancy I have taken to Miss Brooks, and I do not chuse to undeceive her at present. Sir William I shall leave nameless, unless I just mention he seems to draw Lord Wimbleton a good deal from home; but I beg, my dear, you will not make yourself uneasy about this, as I think there is not the least doubt of a good person overcoming an evil one; besides, I would have your sister smart a little, as I think her very wrong to invite a young woman she knew so little of to her house as soon as she was married; but conscious of her own integrity of heart, she thinks no ill of others.

There is a Lord Revel' introduced in St. James's Square, he is acquainted with the Brooks's, and is an intimate friend of Sir Henry Fortescue's. He seems quite the man of fashion, and a great admirer

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of the fair sex. I can say nothing further of him at present, nor indeed of any thing else, as I think I have run into a sufficient length already. I have been looking over what I have written, and do not know I ever in my life before wrote so serious a letter, or indeed one so much to the purpose, as I think you will say, if you have any complaisance at all. Mr. and Mrs. Watson are both well, who with my mamma desire their best love to you, and respects to Lady Catherine. Say all that is respectful for me I beg, and assure yourself of the unalterable esteem of

MARY MANLY.

LETTER

LETTER LXXII.

The Hon. EDWARD WESTON to JOHN
HERVEY, Esq.

YOU will be surpris'd, my dear friend,
to receive a letter from me unknown to my brother, but I am really very much alarmed for his health. He has no particular ailment, but his altered looks and loss of appetite make me fear a consumption. My brother officers are of the same opinion. I once propos'd a trip to Southampton that he might see Miss Watson and unburthen his mind to her, but he would not hear of it, telling me he made no doubt she had forgot she ever knew a Farmborough, and he did not wish her ever to know the beggared Weston.

I am sorry to give pain to your worthy heart, my friend, but it is necessary. Sure my uncle must relent when he hears
his

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his favourite nephew is reduced to the brink of the grave. I care not for myself, let him but restore *him* to his affection and favour, and I shall be content to push my fortune how I can.

Adieu, my friend, I must haste to conclude, as the packet is ready to sail.

Yours,

E. WESTON.

LETTER LXXIII.

Miss WATSON to LADY WIMBLETON.

THOUGH my letters can afford very little amusement to you, my sister, who live in the very centre of pleasure; I am loath to delay writing, as I know you are anxious about my health, but indeed I find myself much better than I have been for some time. This air seems to agree with me. Lady Catherine insists on my going into company, which to oblige

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oblige her I comply with. Here are a number of red-coats, who have nought to do but pour the most fulsome compliments into the ears of those females who are silly enough to attend them. I will not be so much of a prude as to deny having some share of the attention of those male flirts, for they are worthy no better appellation; as flirts they are in every sense of the word. They will, in spite of myself, make me draw comparisons not much to their advantage, for often when they have paid me some frivolous compliment, I exclaim within myself, How different to Lord Wimbleton, to Farmborough, or even Westbury! I have as yet seen no one I know. But how should I, say you, for my acquaintance is but scant when absent from Elm-Wood. You did not tell me, my dear, how long Sir William and Miss Brooks proposed staying. Pray let me know a few particulars in your next concerning them; and my
lord

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lord too, for you scarce mention him, I am much obliged to Mr. Hervey for his enquiries after me. I had a letter from Lady Mary yesterday, which I will soon answer: I should like to do that in person. You will call me whimsical. I am certain Lady Catherine does all in her power to make me happy; yet never having being long from my friends, I don't feel myself so easy. Heigh ho! I wish I was at Elm-Wood; or rather that I had never left it. With this I conclude myself,

ELIZA WATSON.

LETTER LXXIV.

Sir WILLIAM BROOKS to A. DINGLEY, Esq.

MY sister goes on swimmingly, and I under her directions do the same. Already doth that foul fiend jealousy begin to operate in the breast of my friend.

I

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I scarcely know how to get out: but now let me tell you all about it, as the women say.

I told you in my last, that Revel was introduced here. The first moment my sister and I had to ourselves, she opened the plot, which I think you will say, Dingley, merits being recorded in letters of gold. But you must take it in short, not having much time for writing.

Helen intends, nay has already insinuated to Lady Wimbleton, that she is in love with Lord Revel, but that her brother having taken some unaccountable dislike, insisted on her not seeing him. Now, continued she (for take it in her own words) if you, my dear Lady Wimbleton, will admit of his visits, my brother's respect for your ladyship will prevent his taking notice of it; neither would I have Revel think I wished for his company. He never made any formal declaration to me; but that I imputed

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puted to my brother's neglect of him. She stopped, and her ladyship replied thus: I am amazed at your brother's dislike of his lordship, my dear; as I have always heard from Lord Wimbleton a very good character of Revel. Suppose I speak to my lord to talk with your brother, and hear the reason of his coolness. Good heavens! my dear Lady Wimbleton, you frighten me out of my wits; my brother would never forgive me: no, my dear creature, you must promise me not to mention it to any soul, not even to your sister, mother, or cousin. Do for heaven's sake promise me, for I shall be undone if you mention it. Certainly I will not, my dear, returned her ladyship, laughing, if it will be of such bad consequence; but pray give me a reason, for you have greatly raised my curiosity.

I cannot now, my lady, but must say you will greatly oblige me by encouraging
 Lord

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Lord Revel's visits; though unless you will faithfully promise not to own it was by my desire, I would rather forego the pleasure of seeing him.

I would very readily oblige you, my dear Miss Brooks, and will certainly admit his lordship among the other gentlemen who visit here, but cannot, consistent with my duty as a wife, do any more. Well, but you will not mention our conversation to any one, my dear madam. No, my dear, you may depend on it. Thus ended their discourse. You see her ladyship has her thoughts about her; but Helen makes herself easy, as she has got her promise of secrecy; besides she really does encourage Lord Revel to come very often, and he seems not the least backward, for between you and me, I believe he admires Lady Wimbleton very much.

My lord I have some notion is heartily tired of his shackles already; which he

in

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in some measure has me to thank for ; not that I have as yet attempted to make him jealous ; but having procured him a handsome mistress, and choused him out of a few hundreds at Brooks's, with the addition of more wine than usual has rather sickened him of matrimony ; not that I think he loves his wife a jot less than he did the first week he married her ; but nothing can make a husband more disagreeable to his lady than drinking. The gambling and mistresses are yet unknown to her ; but in a short time it shall be my care to let her know both.

I hope that sanctified dog Rivers will keep in the country, for was he to come, it would knock all our wise schemes on the head. This is a devilish long letter, therefore will put an end to it immediately.

Yours sincerely,

WILLIAM BROOKS.

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LETTER LXXV.

LADY WIMBLETON to Miss
RICHINGFORD.

THOUGH I have received no answer to my last, I cannot help writing. I am not well, my dear Sophia, and would give the world to have a little private talk with you. I have been hurried into a *promise* I am afraid I have made too rashly. You are surprised! It is true, I have promised not to tell it to any one; but writing was not mentioned.

Yesterday as I was reading in my dressing room, Miss Brooks entered; but it is first necessary to tell you, the other night at the opera we met a gentleman, whom my having some slight acquaintance with, and finding the Brooks's seem to know him intimately, invited him home to supper.

Lord

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Lord Revel, for that's his name, is very agreeable, and has called here every day since. Yesterday morning (as I before said) Miss Brooks entered and begged me to encourage Lord Revel's visits here, as she liked him much, but her brother having taken some unaccountable antipathy, dared not encourage him.

I said I would tell my lord, and desire him to talk with Sir William. She was quite frightened, begging me not to tell any soul of it; and moreover said, she should be miserable if I mentioned it to any one, at the same time naming my several relations. Finding her so very urgent, I promised her I would not, and Lord Revel I would certainly see amongst other gentleman who visit here; but more I could not do consistent with my duty as a wife.

I have thought more of this conversation since than I did at the time. Lord Revel is continually here, yet Miss Brooks

Brooks seems rather to shun than seek his company ; for this morning, though she was sitting with me when his lordship entered, she almost immediately rose and left the room ; and I soon afterwards heard her romping with Wimbleton in the breakfast parlour, which pretty diversion they take every morning.

I know not what to make of Lord Revel ; he treats her with respect, to be sure, that respect is very distant. I do not like his lordship's being so much here ; more especially, as Wimbleton said something last night which alarmed me. Being engaged to a ball and supper at the Countess of Chorlebury's yesterday, it was five in the morning before I returned home. My lord was invited, but declined going. Miss Brooks and I were first in St. James's Square. Scarce was I undressed, when my lord rapped at the door. When he entered my apartment, I saw he was very much in liquor, and seemed very cross ;
he

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he asked me who I had danced with? I told him. He then asked, was Revel there? Yes, said I, and wanted me to dance with him, but being previously engaged to Lord Fairly, I could not. He is very obliging, he returned, in a surly tone; why he wants to be your partner at every ball. He soon afterwards fell asleep; and this morning seemed to have forgot that any thing had passed; for when Lord Revel entered, he behaved to him in the same friendly manner as usual.

I am certain my behaviour was constrained, and as I perceived both Miss Brooks and her brother observed me very attentively, contrary to my usual custom, as soon as breakfast was over I ordered the carriage instead of going into the drawing room, and went out. I met Lady Dancer, who insisted on my accompanying her to the flower garden. We had not long been there, when I saw Lord Revel

Revel at a distance. He immediately joined us, and her ladyship (with whom he is a very great favourite) engaged him in chat. I had just told her I must wish her a good morning, when my lord and Sir William entered the garden; they immediately came up, and I overheard Brooks say to Revel, "So, my lord, "you hurried from St. James's Square "to enjoy these rural shades, or rather "the company of the woman you adore!" "I don't understand you, Sir William, "(returned he)." "No! why every "body knows the very great favourite "you are with Lady Dancer."

I cannot help thinking this was a turn off, as his eyes were directed to me when he spoke.

I hurried away, and went home immediately: we had company to dinner, but as soon as they were gone I retired, and have been writing ever since. I know not how to act; I have been cautioned

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against Miss Brooks, yet cannot bring myself to think ill of her. She may like this man, though I don't think he likes her. Her romping with my husband I attribute to nothing but the high spirits she possesses; as in the company of single men she behaves with modest reserve, at least before me, yet is it necessary to clear myself; and if my lord ever mentions Revel again, I shall not, nor indeed must keep the secret from him.

He is out again to-night, and what time he will come home I know not. My sister is still at Southampton, and her letters shew want of spirits, as you will say this does of *mine*. Indeed I am far from being well, and believe I shall go to bed as soon as I have subscribed myself

Your affectionate friend,

ARABELLA WIMBLETON.

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LETTER LXXVI.

Lord REVEL to Sir HENRY FORTESCUE.

I Imagine you are by this time at your destined port. As to me, shall not join you as I first intended; I have been in town about a month, and here shall continue. As I was one night at the opera, I stumbled on Sir William Brooks and his sister; they were in company with Lord and Lady Wimbleton, whose house they are at. His lordship finding I was acquainted with them, (for his own acquaintance with me was very slight) invited me home to supper. I complied with his invitation, though I was far from wishing to renew my acquaintance with Miss Brooks. But however it happens, I am now scarce ever from the house; I believe it is infatuation, for certain it

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is that I have a greater disgust than ever to that lady; yet I cannot assign a reason for it. You will tell me I am a riddle. Upon honour I scarce know what to make of myself, I am almost every day there, though for why or wherefore I cannot divine.

My lord receives me with great friendship; Sir William with a kind of sneer; my lady with much sweetness; and Miss Brooks with smiles. An odd description, cry you. Why, 'faith it is, but it is a very true one. Now pray, Fortescue, try to solve the ænigma; and for the present it shall here rest.

Miss Watson being still at Southampton, I have not seen her, but if she in the least resembles her sister, will pronounce her an angel. I have often met Lady Mary Manly in St. James's Square, and think her a very agreeable young lady. I have no news to tell you, for was I to
enter

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enter on the affairs of the nation, should drive you and myself mad, and therefore bid you farewell.

Yours,

A. REVEL.

LETTER LXXVII.

Miss WATSON to LADY MARY MANLY.

DEAR LADY MARY,

I Received your very friendly letter yesterday, which I thank you much for. I am not at all surpris'd at your dislike of Miss Brooks, as my mind strangely misgives she will prove a deceitful baggage to my poor sister. I cannot help a pang at that part where you say, "My lord is more from home than usual." Good heaven! should Sir William draw him into any wrong courses, what will become of our Ara-

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bella ! but I will try to make myself easy, as you have promised a strict watch.

This place is very dull, at least so it appears to me, though I fancy all would be alike, for where, my dear cousin, can the heart not at ease find rest ? That mine is not at ease, is too certain ; yet do I strive to appear happy. You will naturally ask the cause ; but spare me the recital ; believe me it is no want of confidence in my dear Lady Mary, but a desire I have to forget what is past.

I am dull to-day methinks. Pray write, my dear, the first leisure moment you have ; do not hide any thing from me, I beg, as I always think to know the worst at first is best. Adieu, my dear, and believe me

Your affectionate

ELIZA WATSON.

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LETTER LXXVIII.

Sir HENRY FORTESCUE to Lord REVEL.

Carrick Castle.

YOUR last, my lord, was indeed a riddle, and I know of but one way of solving it. You are (I will not say quite) but almost in love with Lady Wimbleton. Was her ladyship like some of our modern women of quality, I should laugh at you; but as I think her and Miss Watson are exempt from most of the foibles so natural to the sex, I am inclined to pity and caution you. To hurt the honour of Wimbleton I am certain would be attended with very bad consequences; not but I think her ladyship would shudder at the bare idea of falsifying her marriage vow. Believe me, if ever you will put any confidence in me, that Miss Brooks is a very devil in petticoats. She had the character of being

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the most malicious fiend in nature when a child ; and depend upon it she is not now altered. When you mentioned her being at Bath, I did not recollect her, but I now remember having seen her in Paris, in company with a Miss Laroach. I dare say I need not remind you of the old adage, *Evil communications corrupt good manners* ; for this Laroach was sent to a convent in France by her parents, for an intrigue she had with one of her father's footmen. This is the girl who is the bosom friend of Miss Brooks. You will wonder how I gained my intelligence : it is from a friend of mine, who I am certain tells the truth. It is not for nothing, Archer, I have so despicable an opinion of the women ; though I will own Miss Watson and her sister have staggered that opinion greatly. I would advise you to be on your guard ; remember Lady Wimbleton is another's property ; you had better absent yourself from the house, and never
see

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see her more. Lady Mary I cannot like, though I believe she has no capital failing. I shall stay here a great while longer I believe, but don't cease writing, as I am uncertain.

Yours,

H. FORTESCUE.

LETTER LXXIX.

JOHN HERVEY, Esq. to LORD WESTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I Am very much alarmed for your health, not having heard from you these six weeks past; one of you must be ill, or you would certainly have written. I would have waited another post, but the Earl of Wallbrook desired I would send a letter to you immediately. This request would have given me pleasure, if he had not added, I have a wife in view

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for Lord Weston, whom he can have no reasonable objection to. The first part of his speech raised my hopes, but the latter damped them again. Your lordship gives me great pleasure, said I, by desiring me to recal your nephews, though I am sorry to hear you have a wife prepared for one, as I greatly fear he will again incur your displeasure, by refusing her. He was offended at this, and told me I might do as I liked, as he could write himself; but he must be infatuated, continued he, if he chuses rather to starve under my displeasure, than marry a woman who has a large fortune, a handsome person, and almost every accomplishment a female need possess.

I said no more just then, but told him I would write immediately. I have not the least notion who the lady is he has picked out, but I think I would have you come immediately, for fear of any change in his mind. You will have no occasion

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to go to America, as a peace is nearly concluded. I need not I am sure advise you to hasten to town, my dear George. I must write a few lines to Ned, by the same post.

Farewel, my friend, and believe me I shall wait with anxious impatience till I have the pleasure of seeing you restored to your uncle's favour.

Yours,

J. HERVEY.

LETTER LXXX.

JOHN HERVEY, Esq. to the Hon.
EDWARD WESTON.

I Have very little to say to you, Ned, as your spirits will always sustain you. However, let me caution you not to tarry at Southampton at all, and take a post immediately, and set off for town, nor

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let your brother have the least glimpse of Miss Watson ; for remember your uncle is very obstinate, and will have his own way. The Earl writes himself to your colonel to beg leave of absence. Remember what I have said above, and don't disobey my orders. Farewel, and assure yourself of my best wishes.

Yours,

J. HERVEY.

LETTER LXXXI.

Mr. WATSON to LADY CATHERINE
WORTHY.

DEAR MADAM,

TO say your last gave me and Mrs. Watson pain is unnecessary, as such a feeling heart as your ladyship's can well imagine, to hear that the health of our child is impaired, must alarm us; but
what

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what I am going to tell you will, I am certain, give you pleasure. A short time before we left Elm-Wood, two gentlemen came to a Farmer Hobson's, to lodge and board; they were officers, and past as friends; the one named Farmborough, the other Westbury. I invited them to the Wood; nay, even pressed them to reside there, which they refused. Captain Farmborough, the eldest of the two, seemed a most sensible and accomplished young man. None of the pragmatical fopperies so inherent in the generality of our young men, appeared visible in him. When he addressed the ladies, it was with an easy cheerful though respectful familiarity, which could not fail of being agreeable to a woman of virtue and sense. Captain Westbury possessed a cheerfulness which pleased us all, but our Eliza always appeared the most satisfied with Farmborough. I observed them well, and even interrogated him on his family
and

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and connections ; but seeing he evaded my questions, and as I had no reason to think he tried to gain my daughter's affections, I dropped the subject. A short time after Arabella's marriage with Lord Wimbleton was talked of, and we received a letter that his lordship would be at Elm-Wood in a few days. The morning after this, Farmborough and his friend called, telling us they came to take their leave, as they were going into the north. The former looked melancholy, and complained of a pain in his head. On taking leave of Eliza, he pressed her hand with great warmth, and seemed to wish to speak, but could not. Eliza from that time lost both spirits and appetite. We took notice, but she always made some frivolous excuse. I was far from wishing to controul the inclinations of either of my children ; but at the same time was determined to hinder them if possible from throwing themselves away on some paltry fellow,

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fellow, who married them only for their money. When we came to town, your ladyship knows what passed concerning Sir Henry Fortescue. I was concerned she refused, and it was with difficulty I will own, I consented to dismiss him through yours and my wife's persuasion.

I am afraid your ladyship will be tired of this preamble, and wonder where it will end, but I am now coming to the point. Yesterday morning being alone in the parlour, the servant announced the Earl of Wallbrook. I was surprised at a visit from the Earl, as I had scarce ever seen him.

"You are surprised, Mr. Watson, (said he) at a visit from me, but I could wish to have a little talk with you." I bowed my assent, and after he was seated thus began. "You have a daughter unmarried, sir, I believe."

"I have, my lord, she is now at Southampton."

"Were

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“ Were there not two young gentlemen in the militia last summer at a farmer’s near your house ?”

“ Yes, sir; Captains Farmborough and Westbury. Two of the most agreeable young men I ever knew.”

“ Will you excuse me, sir, if I ask if you discovered any partiality in your daughter to either of them ?”

“ No, my lord, I cannot say I did while they were in the country; but since I have been in town, have had reason to think my daughter’s heart was engaged; neither do I know of any one but Captain Farmborough who can be in possession of it; yet I am certain he has not offered himself to her, though I have reason to think he greatly admired her.”

“ Had he made her an offer of his hand, would you have accepted of him for a son-in-law ?”

“ I do

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“ I do not know your motives, my
“ lord, for making these enquiries, but
“ as I have no doubt of your giving me
“ a sufficient reason, I will answer you
“ with candour. I took so great a fancy
“ to Captain Farmborough and his friend,
“ that if either had offered himself, I
“ should have had no objection, provided
“ I had found them on enquiry what their
“ appearance bespoke ; but as nothing of
“ the sort passed, I had no right to pry
“ into their secrets. Thus, my lord, have
“ I told you my mind.”

“ I am obliged to you, sir, and will
“ now give you a reason for being thus
“ inquisitive. You will be surpris'd when
“ I tell you that the two young men in
“ question are my nephews. The names of
“ Farmborough and Westbury are ficti-
“ tious. Having lost a very large sum at
“ the gaming table at ——— camp, and
“ knowing the antipathy I had to any
“ thing of the sort, they retired to re-
“ trieve

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“ retrieve their shattered fortunes, having
 “ given me reason to think they were
 “ going to France ; but being soon tired
 “ of their country residence, were per-
 “ suaded by their friend Mr. Hervey to
 “ come to town, and confess their errors
 “ to me. They did so, but I was so en-
 “ raged at that moment, that I forbade
 “ them the house. Edward pleaded hard
 “ for his brother Lord Weston.” You
 may imagine, my dear Lady Catherine,
 I looked amazed at hearing the name of
 Lord Weston, a name I had so often
 heard you mention with pleasure.

“ You are surpris'd, sir, (continued
 “ the Earl) but Captain Farmborough is
 “ in reality Lord Weston, and Westbury
 “ his brother. Edward begged I would
 “ forgive his brother, as he was very
 “ much in love with a young lady he
 “ became acquainted with in the country.
 “ I answered him with warmth, that if
 “ she was a worthy woman, I would be the
 “ first

“ first to hinder her being allied to a gam-
 “ bler. I saw no more of them, but
 “ however I procured each a commission,
 “ though neither they or Hervey knew
 “ they came from me. I could not help a
 “ pang when I heard they were gone to
 “ Guernsey in their way to America in
 “ the spring. I need not tell you, Mr.
 “ Watson, that gaming above all other
 “ vices, is to be accounted the worst.
 “ What ruin does it not really bring on
 “ our people of fashion ! but I beg par-
 “ don for thus detaining you with my
 “ remarks.

“ Mr. Hervey whom I believe to be
 “ one of the best young men in the pre-
 “ sent age, did not scruple to condemn
 “ my conduct severely ; I was piqued,
 “ and a coolness ensued between us for
 “ several weeks ; we at length grew tired
 “ of our quarrel, and though he would
 “ always defend my nephews with great
 “ warmth, gave up every other point to
 “ me.

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“ me. A few weeks ago he spoke of
 “ Miss Watfon, telling me that was the
 “ young lady Lord Weston was so much
 “ in love with.

“ I asked him if he thought she really
 “ was insensible of the place she held in
 “ his esteem ; and he assured me she was ;
 “ and moreover she knew him by no
 “ other name or title than that of Captain
 “ Farmborough. A few evenings after
 “ this I saw her at the play, and never
 “ in my life did I see a young lady whom
 “ I liked so well at first sight. The lively
 “ and unaffected sensibility she betrayed
 “ at sight of Mrs. Siddons in *Jane Shore*,
 “ charmed me beyond measure, and I
 “ determined from that moment, if the
 “ match with Sir Henry Fortescue went
 “ off, as there was a talk it would, to
 “ pay you a visit in order to propose
 “ Lord Weston for your son-in-law. The
 “ young lady going to Southampton with
 “ the amiable Lady Catherine Worthy,
 “ prevented

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“prevented me at that time, but a few
“days ago a letter was brought to my
“house for Mr. Hervey, whom the ser-
“vants thought was with me, but he was
“just gone out. I looked at the super-
“scription, and finding it to be the hand-
“writing of my nephew, curiosity in a
“moment got the better of honour, and
“I broke the seal. Judge of my sensa-
“tions, Mr. Watson, on reading this let-
“ter!” At the same time giving me from
his letter-case the enclosed;* when I
had read, and returned it to the Earl,
he said, “Well, my good sir, what is best
“to be done in this affair?”

“Why, my lord, from what I have
“seen of the young gentleman, and from
“what your lordship has told me, I think
“he has already suffered enough. I am
“willing, with your consent to give him
“my daughter, with the same fortune I
“gave

* See the letter from the Hon. E. Weston to Mr.
Hervey.

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“ gave her sister on her marriage with
“ Lord Wimbleton (provided the young
“ people really like each other) and I
“ make no doubt you will enable your
“ nephew to make a proper settlement on
“ my Eliza.”

“ That you may depend on, my friend,
“ from this day I will settle on Lord
“ Weston fifteen thousand a year, which
“ with his own will be twenty. But now
“ I should like to bring the young people
“ together without their being told for
“ what purpose.”

But as I think I have already sufficiently tired your ladyship, I will give you our plot in as concise a manner as possible.

If you, my good madam, will tell her that I have had a very advantageous proposal for her from the Earl of Wallbrook, for his nephew Lord Weston; but if on seeing him she dislikes him, and will give a sufficient reason for so doing, I will not insist

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insist on the match. This, my lady, the Earl, the Countess of Chorlebury, (as to Lady Mary we dare not trust her with the secret) and Mrs. Watson, think the least likely to alarm her. The Earl has desired Mr. Hervey to write to recal the Westons home, and to tell Lord Weston he has provided a wife for him; this Hervey objected to, as he was sure he would never marry any other woman than our Eliza.

This, madam, is our scheme, and heaven forbid any cross accident should intervene to rob us of the felicity we shall each enjoy at a meeting so unexpected.

No one is in the secret besides the abovementioned, but Lady Wimbleton, and she does not know it is Farmborough, as we only tell her of Lord Weston, and that we do not wish it to be known yet. Mary is crazy with curiosity, but we tell her to have patience till she sees her cousin, who will tell her all.

I will

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I will conclude with one joint request from us all, which is, that your ladyship will accompany our Eliza to town, according to the sincere desire of

Your ladyship's

Most obedient humble servants,

ALFRED and ELIZA WATSON.

LETTER LXXXII.

Miss RICHINGFORD to LADY
WIMBLETON.

Richingford Abbey.

YOUR last, my dear Arabella, alarms me much. For heaven's sake take care what you are about ! you have a vile fiend to deal with. O my friend ! why would you not take the caution given you by your sister ? For heaven's sake be on your guard, and give orders to be denied to Lord Revel ; nor hesitate a moment, when my lord speaks of him, to tell

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tell him the whole. Indeed I am afraid it is all a vile trick. Revel may be innocent, and he may not, but every thing looks black on the side of the Brooks's.

I should have answered the letter I received before your last, but have been very ill with a cold.

I am sorry to find Lady Betty Bolton bears so indifferent a character : I was in hopes of finding an agreeable companion in her. They are expected on Sunday to dinner, when I shall soon have an opportunity of judging for myself. The ladies here are all preparing smart dresses to visit this genteel family. I, for my part, have prepared nothing, not even my looks, as every feature is swelled with the violence of my cold.

Miss Prue observed yesterday, it was very unlucky I should be so much indisposed just as they were coming. I had no spirits to answer; when that moment I

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received

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received your letter. Mrs. Ludlow is come back, and with me enjoys the fufs the two families are making with their drefs. At the defire of the villagers, Mr. Niggard is preparing a difcourfe to welcome them into the country. They all feem to adore the Meads, and new joy is vifible in every countenance, as the time draws near. I long for another letter; be fure, my dear friend, you hide nothing from me. I am happy to hear Mr. Watfon has difmiffed Sir Henry Fortefcue, as his vifits were fo difagreeable to your fifter, and hope fhe will foon recover her wonted tranquility. I again beg you will be on your guard, and for heaven's fake, my love, be drawn in no more to keep a fecret, efpecially concerning a love affair, from your hufband. Set your wits to work to get rid of Sir William and his fifter as foon as poffible, for they are not fafe people to keep in your houfe. Adieu,
my

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my dear, pray heaven you may escape all bad designs!

Your affectionate friend,

SOPHIA RICHINGFORD.

LETTER LXXXIII.

Miss WATSON to LADY WIMBLETON.

Southampton.

MY DEAR SISTER,

GOOD heaven! what am I reserved for! Am I, who would not willingly offend a worm, to be the means of giving so much disquiet to my dearest friends? for indeed, indeed I cannot accept Lord Weston. It is true Lady Catherine assures me they will not force my inclinations, provided I will give a sufficient reason for refusing him. O my dear papa, little do you know my heart. What

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reason

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reason can I give for rejecting a man whom every one admires? You, my sister, have given a most amiable sketch of him in one of your letters, and Lady Catherine says, he is one of the best young men she ever knew. What reason then, let me again repeat, can I give for refusing him? Will not papa and mamma be ready to spurn their child when they hear she has given her heart to one whom she knows only by name? Nay, is in doubt if ever he thought of her or not? It is true, reason may preach, but love will have its own way. To town I must go, or forfeit all claim to parental love: cruel task, plead for me, my sister, but do not tell the real cause: no, I will bend this stubborn heart and force it to obey.

Saturday morning I set off, but Lady Catherine insists on my going to the assembly room this evening. Cruel lady, little do you think what my poor heart suffers, or you would not force me into company.

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company. I must prepare to dress: hateful task to a mind not at ease. Adieu till my return.

Wednesday evening, eleven o'clock,

O my sister, my Arabella, I have seen him! but ah, how changed! no more do the roses bloom in his cheek, or pleasure sparkle in his eye. You are impatient for an explanation. With a heavy heart I went to the rooms; I was asked by several to dance, but declined it. I sat for some time looking with great attention at the dancers, so at least I endeavoured to make those near think, for heaven knows my heart was quite foreign to the place. I had sat about an hour, when I begged Lady Catherine to quit the rooms. I arose for that purpose, and had just got to the door that leads to the card-room, when I saw Captain Farmborough going out of the opposite door, followed by

D 3

Captain

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Captain Westbury; but as I before said, so changed, that had it not been for the last mentioned gentleman, I should scarcely have known him. Happy was it for me that no one was near, for 'spite of myself, I could not help exclaiming! Good God! is it possible that is the once elegant Farmborough! I caught hold of the pannel of the door to support myself, till I had somewhat recovered the palpitation I was thrown into. They had by this time left the room, nor do I think either of them had perceived me.

I hastened to the table that Lady Catherine was at, and intreated her to go home as soon as she had finished her game; this she obligingly did, and hurrying up to my room, I sat down to ease my heart to my Arabella. Ought I not to rejoice that they did not see me? but methinks it is odd that I should be above an hour in the adjoining room and yet not see them before. What can be the reason

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reason he is so altered. I can scarcely believe either my senses or my eyes that it was really him, yet too sure it was. O Farmborough! your image is too strongly engraven on this foolish heart ever to be erased. Do not, O do not, my sister, hate me for this declaration; believe me, I despise myself. But to you I may open my heart, nor do I fear your not treating it with your usual candour; yet what will my friends say, especially my parents, who have always treated me with so much indulgence?

Adieu, my best love; spare a little pity for your

ELIZA WATSON.

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LETTER

LETTER LXXXIV.

LADY WIMBLETON to Miss
RICHINGFORD.

I Received yours, my dear, this morning, and thank you, my sweet friend, for your advice, and will follow it as soon as possible. Ah! why indeed did I not listen to the friendly caution of my sister and all my friends. I am distressed on every side; distressed for myself, and distressed for her. My father has proposed another lover to her whom she can give no justifiable reason for refusing. I don't know if ever I spoke of Lord Weston to you, but next to my Wimpleton I thought the handsomest man I ever saw. He is the one now proposed as a husband for Eliza, but she assures me in a letter I had from her this morning, that she cannot marry him; then again, that she will strive to bend her stubborn heart

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heart, as she calls it. She has seen Farmborough at the assembly rooms, but he did not see her. She adds, he is much altered, and looks pale and thin. That *he* loves her, is I think as certain as that she loves him; but why then not have taken some method to have declared himself. There was something very mysterious, by my sister's description, in his behaviour while at the wood. In short, I know not what to make of him. Heaven knows I am at present too unhappy myself to afford much comfort to others. My lord treats me with that cold indifference so common among our married people of fashion, he has likewise contracted a habit of drinking, and seldom or ever comes home till he is incapable of either talking or hearing reason; he keeps too very late hours, consequently late in the day before he rises; he wishes me a good morning with much more coldness than he does Miss Brooks; they soon enter into a dispute

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which generally terminates in a game of romps. What can I do? I cannot tamely sit by without discovering some uneasiness; and if I leave them to themselves they may think I give encouragement to their fooleries. Company coming in interrupts them, when my lord goes out; sometimes dines at home, sometimes not. Our evenings we either spend out or in company at home; I scarce ever see my lord after the morning, till the time above-mentioned. If I stay at home in hopes of catching him by himself, he either comes not at all, or Sir William or Miss Brooks contrive to be by my side. I know not what to make of this girl's behaviour; if I attempt to draw her into discourse about Lord Revel, she flies me, and her place is quickly supplied by her brother, whose discourse of late I do not at all approve. In short, they never leave me alone a single minute, unless it is with Lord Revel. I know not what to do;

to

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to forbid his lordship the house without some cause for so doing, would damage him, and perhaps give my enemies a handle against me to my lord, In short, I am bewildered. I once had thoughts of telling my mamma the whole, but she thinks me happy, and why should I undeceive her? Besides, my dear, it is a very tender point to complain of one's husband to any body.

Patience is the only resource I at present have. I wish I could get rid of the Brooks's, I think I should then have no great difficulty to draw my lord from his present pursuits. I am this evening going to the opera with Sir William and Miss Brooks, I don't yet know if my lord goes with us. Lady Mary Manly is below, therefore must conclude in haste.

Yours,

A. WIMBLETON.

LETTER

L E T T E R LXXXV.

The Hon. EDWARD WESTON to ———
STANLEY, Esq.

Southampton.

JUST arrived, and though I shall probably see you as soon, as you receive this, can't delay writing. It is now eight in the evening, and we propose setting off at six in the morning, when we hope to have the pleasure of dining with you and Hervey. You may imagine we were surpris'd at Hervey's letter. My brother sigh'd, and said I am ready to go, as all places are alike. Finding him so very pliant, I asked him what he would do with the wife his uncle propos'd for him? Ah! Ned, said he, (shaking his head) do not ask me; let us be reconcil'd to the Earl, and I will do all in my power to oblige him. Now methinks this is a
mighty

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mighty wife resolution of George's, whether he keeps it or not. Here he comes.

Half after Ten.

Do not be alarmed when I tell you we have been to the assembly room. This was what my lord came to beg of me. I complied, though against Hervey's orders; however, no harm came of it, Miss Watson was no where to be seen; indeed we did not stay above half an hour. George is gone to bed, where I shall go too, as soon as I have dispatched this. My servant will bring it in the morning, as he begged I would let him set off post to-night, having heard his mother was very ill. Farewel.

Yours,

EDWARD WESTON.

Hervey makes no mention of having received my last letter.

LETTER

LETTER LXXXVI.

LADY MARY MANLY to Miss WATSON.

THOUGH I am so soon to have the pleasure of seeing my dear Eliza, I cannot forbear writing to desire an explanation of you, which I can get of no one else, every thing being carried on with so much privacy.

That a husband is provided for you, I will be sworn; but who he is, or what is his name, or who he belongs to, the duce a bit will they tell me! Nay, they want to persuade me there is none in the case; but that I will not believe. I would have you take care, my sweet coz. for they certainly intend some terrible creature for your husband. Miss Brooks is still with your sister, and as you will soon be here, and be an eye witness of her behaviour yourself, I will tell you that your sister begins to repent her invitation,

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visitation, I am certain ; though I am sure Miss Brooks will be in no hurry to quit St. James's Square.

I do not approve her very forward behaviour to Lord Wimbleton. I called there yesterday morning, and to my great surprise, found only his lordship and Miss Brooks in the parlour. They were disputing about a drawing, which he insisted on seeing, and which ended in a game of romps, not much to the credit of the lady. I am sure even I was shocked, who you know have no objection to innocent mirth. Miss Brooks called to me to help her ; but I told her, I believe in a pretty severe tone, that I never chose to romp with married men.

I enquired where Lady Wimbleton was. O, replied she with a malicious sneer, she is in some of the rooms with Lord Revel. She really shocked me, as what she said I am sure was with no good design. I went in search of my lady,
who

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who was in the drawing room with Lord Revel indeed by her side. She was netting, and he reading. Hey-day! my dear, cried I, I thought you were out, as I found my lord and Miss Brooks alone in the breakfast room; though indeed she told me you was in some of the rooms with Lord Revel.

Arabella coloured, and my lord looked foolish, but rising, wished us a good morning, and left the room. I had just determined to caution her against Miss Brooks, when, evil genius like, in she came. What both alone! cried she, on her entrance, I thought Revel was here. He is just gone, answered my lady. Where did you leave my lord? O lud! I vow I'd like to have forgot; he desired me to tell you he should dine out to day. Dine out! repeated your sister; he told me but this morning he should dine at home. Ay well, he has changed his mind: I am going to Lady Winder's.

What,

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What, leave me quite alone! O no, not alone, for I am certain my brother will dine with your ladyship. More company coming in, prevented farther conversation.

But my mind strangely misgives me there is some vile scheme hatching between the Brooks's to destroy your sister's peace. I was forced to leave the house without telling her my mind, but intend going there to-morrow for that purpose. I must conclude in haste, or shall not have time to dress for the Pantheon.

Yours,

M. MANLY.

LETTER

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LETTER LXXXVII.

ROBERT RIVERS, Esq. to LORD
WIMBLETON.

MY LORD,

YOUR silence alarms me greatly;
you or your lady must be ill, or
you would certainly have favoured me
with a few lines in all this time. I should
have written myself ere this, but by a
fall from my horse my shoulder was dis-
located, and so excruciating was the
pain, owing to its being badly set, for a
whole month I was unable to attend to
any thing; but in the mean time I ex-
pected to hear from your lordship, for I
thought our long tried friendship would
have prevented your supposing my not
writing was through neglect. The coun-
try, considering the time of year, is de-
lightful; but I believe I shall not stay
here much longer, though I shall not
quit

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quit it yet this fortnight, so if you write immediately shall receive your letter in time. Are Sir William Brooks and his sister still with you? I am afraid it will be of no use to caution you against them, as I have done it so many times already; but believe me he will prove himself a very false friend; and I cannot help thinking your delay of writing is occasioned by some of his insinuations, for I believe we most cordially hate each other. I blame you very much for inviting a young fellow into your house at this time; I do not at all approve of new married people having either male or female companion, after they are married, in the house with them; for believe me, my dear Henry, our young people of fashion are very unfit for either party to be connected so closely as living in the same house makes them. If I have entirely lost your friendship, you will throw this aside; but remember I am a few years
older

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older than your lordship, and have had a great deal of experience. I shall wait with no little impatience till the time is expired, that I can reasonably expect an answer, to know whether I have really lost your friendship or not, but till I am convinced of that, I shall subscribe myself your friend, as usual.

R. RIVERS.

LETTER LXXXVIII.

Sir WILLIAM BROOKS to A. DINGLEY, Esq.

I Have had more trouble in making Wimbleton jealous of his wife than I was at first aware of; besides, they are so narrowly watched, at least my lady, there is no speaking to her alone; but thanks to my sister's contrivance, I shall have an opportunity of breaking the ice to-day. My lord dines out, and will,
if

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if my scheme takes, dine out many days more, as does my sister ; therefore shall be quite alone with her ladyship. Would you believe it, Dingley ! My heart quite sinks at the treacherous part I am acting ; but avaunt reflection ! besides I must here conclude, or shall not have time to dress.

Eight o'clock—Evening.

Dingley, I have undertaken a task which I shall find great difficulty in bringing to bear for ——— : but I will give a circumstantial account of the day.

I told you, my lady and I were to dine alone. I went down half an hour before dinner, in hopes of finding her ladyship there ; but was disappointed, as she did not appear till the bell rung. I pretended a surprise at my lord's dining out, as I understood in the morning he would dine at home. She half suppressed
a sigh,

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a sigh, but answered, I fancy he had forgot then he was engaged. Very little past during dinner ; but when the servants were withdrawn, I began a discourse about matrimony. I always thought, said I, when a man was united to a deserving and amiable woman, there was no danger of his neglecting her for another ; but I lately have had occasion to alter my opinion, as I know a gentleman who has been married but a very short time to one of the most beautiful and accomplished young ladies in the kingdom, yet leaves her a prey to others while his time is divided betwixt the gaming table and a mistress.

I looked at her while I spoke, and observed several variations in her countenance, when after a little consideration she replied, “ Don’t you think, Sir William, there may be some fault in the “ wife of your friend ? or rather, may it “ not be some designing person who pre-
“ vails

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“ vails on him to neglect her ?” The latter part of her speech surprised me exceedingly ; but mustering up all my courage, and taking her hand : “ Though
“ it pains me to wound a heart so tender
“ as your ladyship’s, yet can I not longer
“ (at least patiently) bear the slights
“ which I see daily put on your lovely
“ self; the man possessed of so angelic
“ a creature must be a monster to lavish
“ his careffes and fortune on a wretch,
“ who makes a traffic of her charms to
“ every new face she meets.” Astonishment was marked on her countenance !
“ For heaven’s sake, Sir William, explain yourself ! sure you can’t mean
“ my Lord Wimbleton !” “ I do,
“ madam ; and I find it impossible longer
“ to restrain my tongue. The lady whom
“ you saw with him in the opposite box,
“ the other night at the opera, is her to
“ whom he dedicates most of the hours
“ he is absent from you.” She turned
pale,

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pale, but with resoluteness I scarce thought her capable of at such a time, replied :

“ I am obliged to you, sir, for your information, but methinks you would have acted more the part of a friend to have kept it from me.”

She arose and was moving towards the door ; but flying after her I stopped her. “ By heaven you must not leave me ! I can no longer conceal my passion, which absolutely consumes me. I would have tried at surmounting it, but when I see so much beauty and innocence disregarded, I cannot forbear.” Now, Dingley, for the pen of a *Richardson*, to describe her look ; no, a Siddons could not equal her. “ Wretch as thou art, is it for this you have been so sedulous in setting me against my husband ? let go your hold,” (for I had taken her hands) cried she, raising her voice, though I was not afraid of the servants hearing as they were all at dinner. As she

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she repeated her last words, there was a violent rapping at the door; believe me, my heart, callous as it is, sunk, as I expected every moment to see Wimbledon enter; though the fear was momentary, as I knew him to be secure. The drawing-room door opened, and Lord Revel was announced. What he, or the servant thought who ushered him in, I know not, as my lady seemed almost gasping for breath, while I stood like a statue. I scarce know what either of us said, but my lady at length desired Lord Revel to be seated, though she was almost convulsed with terror. She sat down, but hastily arose, and ringing the bell, ordered her carriage. Revel now rising, said, "I beg your ladyship's pardon, I did not know you was going out; pray don't disturb yourself;" and hurried out of the room. His lordship stood for a few moments transfixed with astonishment; but recollecting myself and giving a signi-

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ficant shrug, accompanied by a sneer, he said, "Is it possible!" then stopped, and with a hasty bow left the room. I soon afterwards heard my lady go out; I was quite at a loss how to proceed, but at last determined to write to her, which I did in the following manner.

MADAM,

I scarce know how to address you after my very unguarded behaviour, but if you knew the struggle I have had with my heart ever since the first moment I beheld you, I am certain your gentle nature would pity the wretch who now addresses your ladyship. It remains with yourself what to do or how to act in the *preceding affair*, which I would wish for ever to bury in oblivion; it rests therefore with your ladyship (I again repeat) to represent it to my lord in what manner you think proper. My resolution is taken, as I shall willingly die a martyr to your charms.

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charms. I will no longer trespass on your patience, unless it is to again implore forgiveness for my unguarded behaviour. I remain

Your ladyship's most devoted,
And I am afraid ever constant admirer,

WILLIAM BROOKS.

It was with some little difficulty I penned this billet, but when done, was totally at a loss how to convey it to her, well knowing she would receive nothing from me. I at last determined to give it to my valet, and order him to send it by a chairman to be delivered to her ladyship as soon as she came home, having previously disguised my hand to conceal it from the servants. I do not chuse to go out myself, as my lady may think I go to prevent her lord from coming home, which I know he will not to-night. Farewel for the present.

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One o'clock in the morning.

My lady is just returned, but retired immediately to her chamber. My valet tells me he saw my letter delivered to her. I shall seal this up to night, and send it in the morning; what I shall do next I know not till I have had a lesson from my sister. At present I am fit for any thing that will destroy the peace of Wimbleton and his wife.

Yours,

WILLIAM BROOKS.

LETTER LXXXIX.

LADY WIMBLETON to Miss
RICHINGFORD.

THOUGH I wrote so lately, I cannot forbear again taking up my pen.

The only relief I at present find, is in laying open my heart to you. I told you
we

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we were going to the opera in the evening ; I asked my lord if he would accompany us. " No," was his reply. We went, that is, Miss Brooks, her brother, and self. Just as the second act began, a lady came into the opposite box who attracted the notice of the whole house. For my own part, I took very little, as I soon saw she was no woman of fashion ; but judge of my surprise on again casting my eyes, to see Lord Wimbleton sitting by her side in earnest discourse. I started, and am sure changed colour ; at that moment Lord Revel came into our box. I was unable to speak to him, or answer his enquiries after my health, but with a bow. Had I quitted the house, I knew I should only attract the notice of the audience more, for I already imagined every eye fixed on me ; I therefore sat as tranquil as possible, paying or seeming to pay, my whole attention to the stage. Lord Revel soon left us, as did my lord

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the box he was in, and came round to us. He entered into chat with Miss Brooks who had scarce opened her lips till he came.

When the opera ended, the lady opposite to us quitted the house, as did soon after my lord. I staid the dance and then went home, Miss Brooks, to my great joy, expressing no desire to go into the coffee room. As soon as I got home I retired to my own apartment, for Helen was engaged to a rout. I tried to write, but could not; reading was the same. I went to bed about one, but sleep had fled my eyes. At five my lord came home, but so much in liquor, that finding all talk would be vain, I pretended to be asleep.

I arose the next morning without feeling the least refreshment, and was soon joined in the breakfast parlour by Miss Brooks, who was in high spirits. My lord and Sir William soon joined us, but Lord Wimbleton was sullenly silent. Our
repast

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repast being over, I was going to leave the room, when he said, "Do you go out to dinner to day, my lady?" "No, my lord; you dine at home I suppose?" "Yes, I shall."

I had not been long in the drawing-room, when Lord Revel entered. He sat down, and seeing a book of poems, took it up and read to me half an hour. After this Lady Mary Manly entered, she said she thought I was out; though indeed, added she, Miss Brooks told me you was in some of the rooms with Lord Revel. You may believe I looked silly, as indeed did his lordship, but soon left us. Lady Mary seemed to wish to speak to me, but Miss Brooks joined us. She brought me word that my lord had changed his mind, and would dine out, and that she was going to Lady Winder's. I could not help expressing my surprise, when she added, my brother dines at home. Company coming in, Lady Mary took leave,

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and when they were gone, I came up to my dressing-room to write to you.

I don't know what ails me, but I am uncommonly low to day. I don't intend to go down till I am summoned to dinner, as I don't like being alone with Sir William. I would have sent for mamma but know she is engaged. You will think me very foolish, my dear, but I cannot help it; I am quite in the vapours. I hope for the pleasure of embracing my sister to-morrow or next day. I am impatient for her coming, yet dread it. I heard this morning Sir Andrew Mead was set off for Cumberland. Let me have a long letter I beg, as that is at present one of the greatest pleasures I receive.

The bell rings, perhaps I may add something more after dinner. Adieu for the present.

Eleven

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Eleven at night.

Good heaven! my Sophia, what will become of thy wretched friend? that villain Brooks is certainly determined to destroy my peace. I dreaded going down, but little thought what was to follow.

The vile wretch, after informing me the woman I saw at the opera with my lord, was his mistress, had the audacity to detain me, and the insolence to declare a passion for the *wife of his friend*. Rage and surprise almost deprived me of the power of speech; what I did say, heaven only knows; but the entrance of Lord Revel forced him to let go his hold.

What he thought, I don't know; I sat down on a sofa to recover myself, as I was ready to faint. I soon (scarce knowing what I did) rung, and ordered the carriage. Lord Revel said something, but what, or what I answered, I know not. I went to the Countess of Chorlebury's,

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but the rooms were so crouded I could scarce get a sight of my mother ; besides, what could I have said ? I staid an hour there, and returned home, and immediately went to my apartment, where I have written this.

I am almost distracted, and scarce know how to act, but certainly will desire my lord to insist on the Brooks's quitting the house ; but good heaven ! what will be the consequence ? a duel perhaps will ensue, and Wimbleton may be killed ; yet something I must do to clear my character, which I am afraid, nay sure, has been aspersed to my lord. I am very ill, my Sophia, and cannot proceed ; I will seal this up to send to you ; for God only knows if you will ever receive another line from

Your unhappy, but sincere friend,

A. WIMBLETON.

LETTER

LETTER XC.

Lord REVEL to Sir HENRY FORTESCUE.

YOUR last would have been acknowledged ere this, if I could have answered it with candour. That Miss Brooks is a devil, I am certain of ; that Sir William is a villain, I am convinced; and that Lady Wimbleton is in very great danger, I am assured. I pity my lord, as I am certain he will one day repent of what then perhaps will be too late to recal.

He at present keeps a mistress, and leaves his wife a prey to that wretch Brooks. I called there last night, and found him with Lady Wimbleton alone. She looked terrified almost out of her senses, and the sight of me alarmed him; what was the matter I cannot conceive, as I cannot entertain an ill opinion of my lady, for I think her as virtuous as she is

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beautiful. Confusion was evident, though it seemed from horror, not guilt. She soon left the room; Sir William shrugged up his shoulders, and I not chusing to hold any converse with him, took up my hat and left the house. I certainly admire Lady Wimbleton much, but be assured, Henry, I should shudder at the bare idea of seducing another man's wife; neither am I so far gone as to be obliged to absent myself. I propose calling in St. James's-Square this evening to hear how things go on. Miss Watson is expected in town to-morrow, therefore shall have a chance of seeing her before I leave it. I should wish (dared I take the liberty) to caution my lady concerning the Brooks's, yet is it a delicate point to touch on; very unhappy she certainly is. How can she be otherways? for my lord even appears at public places with his mistress, though his lady is there. This mode

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mode of proceeding must be more cutting to a delicate, sensible, and virtuous mind, than to one who is gay and volatile. That Lady Wimbleton is not of the latter stamp, any one may see; nay, every body must observe that his present conduct hurts her; yet why don't she try to get rid of the Brooks's? It is amazing to me, as she cannot approve of the great familiarity between my lord and Miss Brooks; and I really believe she would boggle at nothing to draw him away from his wife. I am interrupted. Farewel,

Yours,

A. REVEL.

LETTER

LETTER XCI.

SIR WILLIAM BROOKS to A.
DINGLEY, Esq.

BY heaven, Dingley, were it not for my sifter, I verily believe I should go mad! Lady Wimbleton has miscarried, and her life is despaired of. My lord is sent for from Bath, which place he set off for yesterday morning. You know the contents of my last; I have not seen her since.

She went to bed about twelve o'clock, very ill; so ill indeed, that both her women sat up with her. My lord did not come home; but in the morning a letter was delivered to her, which I knew the contents of; it was only to tell her that indispenfible business called him to Bath, and he hoped to see her again in a week's time. A few hours after this, she grew so much worse, that Mrs. Watson

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Watson was sent for, and has been very bad ever since.

I wonder if my lord will come; if he does I am sure I have reason to tremble, as she will certainly come to an eclaircissement immediately. My sister is alarmed too, as she was saying this morning she believed it would be better to leave the house. I am provoked I wrote that letter, as my own hand writing there appears against me. As to Helen, I verily thought she would have beat me when I told her I had written, for she says I may depend on it that will be the first thing she shews my lord.

She is just gone up to my lady to see how she is; I long for her coming down. Hark! she is coming; she is still very bad and hardly spoke to her. Mrs. Watson and Miss (who came to town but last night) with Lady Mary Manly, are with her; and Helen says, they either did, or she thought they did, behave very cool

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cool to her. Indeed I believe none of the family except Lady Wimbleton have greatly liked my sister.

Mrs. Watson said to me this morning, as I was enquiring after her daughter, that it was a very dull house for us. Whether she meant we had better quit it, I know not, though I fancy it was her real meaning. If my lord comes, he will certainly be here to-night or to-morrow morning; it is doubtful whether you will ever receive another letter from me, as it entirely depends on the event of this affair, for if we are discovered, shall immediately set off for the continent, where perhaps we shall see you.

Yours,

WILLIAM BROOKS.

LETTER

LETTER XCII.

Miss WATSON to Miss NEWTON.

London.

MY Harriot says in her last, that she hopes every post will bring her news of my peace and happiness being restored; but they are farther off now, my love, than ever. On my arrival in town, I was informed my sister was very ill; I flew to St. James's Square, where mamma was, and found her bad indeed; she could scarce speak to me, and I believe hardly knew me. My lord was gone to Bath; neither did my sister know it till he was set off. Indeed, my friend, I am afraid he has not used her well. The vile Brooks's are still in the house, and don't seem inclined to quit it: my cousin says she is certain they are at the bottom of all. I am sure I believe it.

Miss Brooks came in this morning to ask how Lady Wimbleton did; but my sister

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sister never opened her lips to her the whole time she staid. An express has been sent off for my lord ; I hope he will come soon, for I am certain my lady has something to communicate, as she often tries to speak to mamma, but is unable through weakness.

She is worse, and is become so delirious that they can hardly keep her in bed ; she insists on being carried to Lord Wimbles-ton. My poor mamma is almost distracted, and papa himself set off after the first express. The dear girl screams when any one comes into the room, and begs mamma will hide her from him ; but we cannot guess who she means. My tears flow so fast, I don't think you'll be able to make this out. I will conclude here, but will not seal it, as we hope to see my lord to-night.

Yours,

E. WATSON.

Thank heaven, he is this moment come !
but my sister is very bad. Adieu.

LETTER XCIII.

Hon. E. WESTON to ——— STANLEY, Esq.

London.

THE devil take you, Stanley, for running out of town just as we were coming in ; I had a thousand things to say, which I cannot so well commit to paper. Hervey tells me you desired I would write all particulars ; as many as I can recollect I will.

On our arrival in town we immediately went to George's, where we found Hervey waiting for us. I must own I was confounded mad when I heard you were gone, and I swore at you most bitterly. When we had dined we went to our lodgings, changed our drefs, and proceeded to the Earl of Wallbrook, who received us with open arms. Tears started into his eyes at sight of my brother's altered looks ! Suffice it to say, we spent a very agreeable evening,

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evening, nor did our uncle once mention any thing of the wife he speaks of to Hervey. Heaven send he may ever hold his peace about her !

My brother is in tolerable spirits, and mends daily. The Earl is quite delighted, and seems fonder of him than ever. I too, at present have a great share of his favor, but don't in the least doubt but I shall offend in less than a week. My uncle would feign have had us stay in his house, but we excused ourselves ; for though I hope we shall commit no *faux pas*, yet I should not chuse to be always under the Earl's eye. Hervey watches us very narrowly I assure you, for 'faith we can scarce stir but we have him at our heels. Here comes George, with a most woeful countenance ! What the duce ails the man. I must throw aside my pen in order to hear what is the matter. Adieu for the present,

He

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He has just heard that Lady Wimb-
ton is very ill ; so ill that her life is de-
spaired of. Her sister is come from
Southampton to see her before she dies :
this is the story George has heard. But
Heaven forbid it should be true ! as I am
certain it would occasion Eliza a great
deal of pain to part with her sister. Wim-
bleton it seems was gone to Bath when
she was taken ill, but an express was sent
off immediately to fetch him to town.

All this Hervey learnt of the Countess
of Chorlebury, whose house he was at
last night. Lady Mary Manly, as well as
Mrs. Watson, are in St. James's Square.
Sir William and Miss Brooks are there on
a visit. I hope there has been no foul
play ; but think it odd Lord Wimb-
leton should go any distance without his lady,
so soon after his marriage (as I don't think
they have been married above four
months). I cannot conceive what pos-
sessed either of them to invite those two
devils

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devils to their house, or why they should take such a fancy to them.

Miss Brooks I never saw, therefore you will say I had no right to condemn her; but Hervey assures me she is good for nothing, as is her brother. We dine to-day with our uncle, and he has promised to accompany us to see *Mrs. Siddons* in *Belvidera*. She is an incomparable actress, is she not? I have but one fault to find with her; she is sometimes in the extreme. Were I to say this to any of our fashionable beaux or belles, they would call me a conceited coxcomb; but to you I may speak my mind. I am impatient to hear how you like Cumberland, and if you have met with any adventures.

To-morrow morning George and I propose taking a trip to see *vos petites garçons*. Apropos, I saw the Right Hon. Lord Scamper last night at the opera; I asked him when he saw his brother; he was rather confused, and answered, not
for

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for some time. I said no more, as I really despise him.

My valet tells me my lord is almost dressed, therefore must conclude in haste.

Yours,

E. WESTON.

LETTER XCIV.

Miss RICHINGFORD to LADY
WIMBLETON.

Richingford-Abbey.

I Was unreasonable enough to hope for another letter from my dear Arabella before I answered her last dreadful one. That vile Sir William I could freely shoot through the head. Lord Wimbleton's conduct I really don't know what to make of. Had you only had it from that villain Brooks, I should have thought it merely

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merely a scheme to destroy your domestic happiness ; but the proof you had at the opera was too convincing ; yet might it not be by way of hearing what you would say ? who knows what insinuations they might have been filling his ears with. I hope Lord Revel is not concerned in any plot against you, for if he is, you are in a sad situation indeed ; yet I hope by this time all is cleared up, and my lord convinced of his own folly, and my sweet friend's innocence. I hope I shall have a letter by next post, if not, I shall be quite miserable.

How is your sister ? I suppose she is with you by this time ; has she forgot her captain yet ? or is she still in *despair* ? Heigh ho ! I would write about the Mead family if I knew you was once more restored to peace and happiness ; but perhaps it may divert you, therefore I will scribble on.

They

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They were expected last Sunday, but did not come till Monday. The ladies were in a violent hurry to see Lady Betty Bolton. I, for my part, suppose should have been the same had it not been for your letter, which I had just received on Tuesday morning, as I was sitting at work in the parlour with my uncle. Sir Andrew Mead was announced, followed by a young gentleman. Suppose I describe him. Methinks you say, Yes. Well then, he is tall and well made, fair, though not effeminate, dark blue eyes, a Roman nose, fresh colour, and good teeth; add to this a handsome hand. But after all this trouble I have taken, perhaps you know him. His name is Stanley, and he is brother to Lord Scamper. Have you ever seen him? if you have, let me know if I have done him justice. But to proceed: Sir Andrew and my good uncle seemed very glad to see each other; Sir Toby presented me to the gentlemen;

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and

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and Sir Andrew was pleased to say, he did not expect to find so fair a flower in this sequestered part of the country. Ah! thought I, nor would I be here if I could help it. He told my uncle that Mr. Stanley was a young gentleman he had a great regard for, and had persuaded him to accompany them into the country. We entered into discourse, and I found this said Stanley both a sensible and a witty fellow: they chatted about an hour, then left us, with an invitation to dine there next day.

The Niggards, Ludlows, Prue, &c. were also invited. My uncle and I were the last there. Lady Mead received us with great politeness, and presented me to Lady Betty Bolton, at the same time saying, you two ladies will be very intimate I dare say: her ladyship curt'sied, but made no reply. Mr. Stanley then came in, and was obliging enough to pay me a great deal of attention, and to my
no

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no small surprise, took very little notice of Lady Betty; and she noticed none except Miss Niggard and her lap-dog. She is certainly very handsome, but, as Lady Mary said, seems insufferably proud, and affected to a degree; we went into the garden after dinner, and left the gentlemen over their bottles. I addressed myself to Lady Betty several times, but as I only received a yes, or a no, grew tired of talking to her, and attended wholly to Lady Mead, who is both a sensible and agreeable lady.

We left the Hall about nine o'clock. Miss Prue and her two companions came home with me in the coach, Sir Toby chusing to walk. Miss Garthron said, this family would make Brompton quite alive, as she made no doubt but they would have more company as the summer advanced. The other two agreed to this, when Miss Prue asked my opinion of Lady Betty. Upon my word, (said I)

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my acquaintance with the lady is at present too short to form a just opinion of her. I think her very handsome, and hope her mind is suitable to her person.

“ I don’t think it is (replied Miss Turner) for she paid very little attention to Mr. Stanley, who seems absolutely to doat on her.”

“ Yes, echoed Miss Garthron, for all the time he was talking to Miss Richingford, his eyes were rivetted on her ladyship.”

You may imagine I was astonished at this, for really as I said above, I thought he took little or no notice of her. In short, they very obligingly pulled Lady Betty to pieces, but all agreed that Mr. Stanley was a very pretty fellow. The coach to my great relief now stopped at the Abbey, and I wished my companions a good night.

I found my uncle in the parlour very merry; for neither Sir Andrew or he spared

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spared the bottle. "Well, my girl,
 "(cried he on my entrance) how do you
 "like my good friends the Meads?"
 "Prodigiously, fir, I assure you." "Lady
 "Betty and Stanley, what say you to
 "them?" "Lady Betty, fir, I must be
 "longer acquainted with to be a judge of
 "either perfections or imperfections; as
 "to Mr. Stanley, I will freely own he
 "seems the most agreeable man I have
 "seen since I have been in this part of
 "the country." "Now, Sir Toby, give
 "me your opinion." "Mine is easily given,
 "child. Lady Betty I despise, and Stanley
 "I shall never like, notwithstanding the
 "good character Sir Andrew gives him,
 "as he is so lately come from that vile
 "place London." I made no answer, as
 I had neither spirits to trifle or dispute.
 As soon as I had supped, I wished him a
bon repos, and retired to my chamber. On
 Friday the good folks returned our visit,
 when Lady Betty condescended to throw

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off a great deal of the hauteur she had before treated me with ; Mr. Stanley, but pshaw ? what business have I always to mention him ? Yet will I own, my dear, that every time I see him he appears more and more agreeable.

Lady Mead begged I would spend a great deal of my time at the Hall, which I have promised to do, and I am certain I shall be very happy with this agreeable family, if I can but hear you are once again restored to one of the greatest blessings in this world, *sweet peace*.

Adieu, my friend, and if you have the least regard, write immediately to

Your sincere and affectionate

SOPHIA RICHINGFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XCV.

LADY WIMBLETON to Miss
RICHINGFORD.

LONG ere this would I have written to my Sophia, had I not been at the brink of the grave. But be not alarmed my love, the all-protecting hand of providence has snatched me from the grim tyrant death, and restored me to peace and happiness. Ah! my Sophia, what have I not suffered? My tears will flow at the remembrance of past events. I wish to recal my scattered thoughts to give you a detail of what is past.

As soon as I had finished my last letter, I went to bed in a state of mind not to be described; neither can I pretend to give you an account of what has past for three weeks. Suffice it to say, at the end of that time I found myself restored to life, and my husband's affections. Some time

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hence, when I have perfectly recovered the use of my reason (for as yet I have it not) I will give you a more circumstantial account. The Brooks's have left the house; where they are gone I know not, nor have I, you may be sure, the least inclination to know.

I wish you was here, my dear Sophia, I could then tell you the whole proceedings. I have seen Mr. Stanley in public, but was never particularly acquainted with him; I am sorry you was disappointed in your hope of a companion in Lady Betty; yet, did she make herself more agreeable, might she not deceive you, as Miss Brooks did me? though I was cautioned against her by my sister, by you, and by Lady Mary; but how charming is flattery? Miss Brooks became acquainted with me at a time when so many pleasing objects presented themselves to my view, that I thought there could be no end to my happiness. But
ah!

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ah! how short lived was the pleasing phantom; it vanished like a dream, and in its place all was horror and confusion. Even now, that every face wears the smile of joy and peace, do I shudder at past reflection; and my blood runs cold at the difficulties I had nigh experienced. But I will no more of this shocking theme.

My poor sister's troubles now share all my attention; yet do I hope that what I have gone through will caution them against forcing the dear girl to marry a man she cannot love. He may perhaps think, provided he has no prior engagement, that he loves, nay, adores her; but when a few months are past, and he recollects she performed her marriage vow with indifference, will he not slight her then? What must become of the wretched victim whose days are doomed to be spent with the girl who despises him? How galling to a sensible mind are disgust and

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ill treatment from those who ought to be their protectors and preservers?

To-morrow we dine at the Earl of Wallbrook's, where poor Eliza will for the first time see the man who is destined for her husband. As he is uncle to Lord Weston, I know she dreads it; yet out of regard to me she tries to stem the torrent of her afflictions. Here she comes! but so melancholy is her air, that my heart bleeds for her. I must bid my dear Sophia adieu, and try to comfort her.

Yours,

ARABELLA WIMBLETON.

LETTER

LETTER XCVI.

LADY MARY MANLY to Miss TALMASH.

HEAVEN be praised, Ethelinda. I am at length permitted to assure you my poor cousin is out of danger. What a dreadful period has the last month appeared to us! I assure you it has lowered my spirits prodigiously. Good heaven! to see a person who but a few weeks before, seemed the happiest of mortals, so soon brought to the brink of the grave! Never, I think, shall I forget the situation of my lord when he discovered his lady's innocence, which he did by a letter written by Brooks, though never opened by her, as she was obliged to be put to bed immediately. Now rage, then despair, alternately took place. He not only called himself the murderer of his child, but of his lady also. For three hours did I sit, fearful to leave him, as I really

F 6 doubted

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ARABELLA WIMBLETON.

LETTER

LETTER XCVI.

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doubted he would lay violent hands on himself, especially as we expected his lady's dissolution every moment.

I at length ventured to leave him, that I might go to Lady Wimbleton, whom I found in a gentle doze. I had sat about an hour, mingling my tears with the distressed mother and sister, when I thought I heard a bustle below. I hastened down stairs, and just as I got to the bottom, met my lord's vallet, who begged me for God's sake to come no farther! What do you mean? cried I, almost frantic with terror. Where is my lord? what has he done? what is the matter? I staid for no answer, but rushed into the parlour, where lay my lord all covered with blood, and to all appearance dead! I clasped my hands together, and could scarce keep myself from fainting; but the horrid scenes I had of late gone through, supported me, and I had presence of mind enough on seeing him stir, to rub his temples

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temples with hartshorn, and apply the same to his nose.

He had just opened his eyes when Mr. Watson entered with a surgeon, and I withdrew while his wounds were examined. I tried to go up stairs, to prevent Mrs. or Miss Watson from coming down, but my feet refused their office, and I had but just strength to reach the antichamber, where I must have fainted, had not a friendly shower of tears come to my relief. I at length assumed some little degree of composure, and went up to Lady Wimbleton's apartment: she was still asleep. Mrs. Watson asked me if I had seen my lord. I told her I had just parted from him, and that Mr. Watson was with him. I evaded any farther questions, and soon again quitted the room and went to my lord, who I found had quite recovered his senses. Both he and Mr. Watson assured me his wound was very slight. My lord then told me,
that

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that after I had left him, he determined to go to find out Brooks ; he succeeded, and insisted on his accompanying him to Hyde Park, which he readily assented to. They fought. My lord first wounded Brooks in the right breast, though so slightly as not to disable him from making a furious pass at Lord Wimbleton, but happily the point only slightly cut his lordship's left arm, which the villain perceiving, was aiming at his heart, when he felt my lord's weapon buried in his side ; he instantly dropped. Wimbleton declared he was shocked, though what he did was in his own defence. He put up his sword, and calling Sir Willam's servant, helped him to bind up the wound, and carry him to the coach. Though his own wound was so slight, yet moving his arm caused it to bleed very much, which together with fatigue of body and mind, occasioned his fainting ; which, added to his clothes being bloody, owing to the assistance
he

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he had given to Sir William, made the servants think he was dead.

Mr. Watson had sent to his lodgings to know how he was; the surgeon said his wounds were very dangerous, but he hoped not mortal. My lord was able to quit his bed the next day, and closely attended on his lady, till she was pronounced out of danger. She is ignorant of his having met Sir William, who mends daily; as we fear the fright even now might be too much for her spirits, she being excessively weak.

She dines to-morrow at the Earl of Wallbrook's for the first time since her illness; though she would gladly have been excused, but on her sister's account consented to go. Poor Eliza is to see Lord Weston for the first time; poor thing, I pity her much; but sure after what has past in St. James's Square, her parents will not force her inclinations,

Adieu,



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Adieu, my dear Ethelinda ; I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you soon, as Lord and Lady Wimbleton set off for the Lodge in a fortnight's time, where I have promised to accompany them.

Yours affectionately,

MARY MANLY.

LETTER XCVII.

STANLEY, Esq. to the Hon.
EDWARD WESTON.

“ **H**ER angel form first caught my eye,
“ Then next her heavenly mind
“ With rapture fill'd my soul, to find
“ Such various virtues all combin'd.

There, Ned, what think you of my poetry ? I make no doubt but you will abuse it ; but as I never pretended to any thing of the sort before, and most probably

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bably never shall again ; I beg you will let it pass.

You are impatient to know who the phoenix is that could occasion me to turn poet. But you must first wait till I have acknowledged the receipt of your last, which I hope it is needless to assure you gave me the truest pleasure. A hope still possesses my breast, that your uncle will allow your brother to refuse the lady he has chosen for him, if he cannot persuade himself to like her. I am sorry to hear of Lady Wimbleton's being in so dangerous a way, but sincerely hope she is by this time recovered.

You ask how I like Cumberland ? So well that I shall find great difficulty in leaving it, unless accompanied by her who occasioned the foregoing lines. She is niece to Sir Toby Richingford, and is, in my mind, without exception one of the finest women I ever saw. The day after our arrival at the Hall, Sir Andrew took

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took me to the Abbey. On the sight of Miss Richingford, I felt a palpitation at my heart I had never experienced before; as I little expected, as Sir Andrew justly said, to find *so fair a flower in this sequestered spot of the world*. In short, the oftener I converse with her, the more I am entangled. Her uncle, for reasons best known to himself (for so at least they tell me) has a great objection to her marrying; but I believe it is owing to *three female dragons who watch this Hesperian fruit*. They are old maids, and like most of their sisterhood, with the lovely Sophia to be the same; though there must have been a strange mistake if ever she was designed for one of their society.

I have made no secret of my passion for Miss Richingford to the Meads; though as yet have not dared disclose it to the lovely maid.

I am told by the inhabitants here, she used to possess amazing spirits, which is

now

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now indeed at times visible ; but they have been for some time lowered by the illness of a friend who resides in town.

Now, Ned, should this friend prove a rival, what is to become of me ? Why I must fly the place, and try to forget her. Sir Andrew calls me to take a walk, so will not finish till I return.

Just returned with (to use a vulgar phrase) a budget full of news. We called at Richingford Abbey in our walk ; the two knights entering into discourse, I strolled into the garden, where Sir Toby told me to my great surprise, his niece was. I saw her at a distance, with a letter in her hand ; I hastened towards her ; but to my great concern found her in tears. She instantly perceived me ; I took her hand ; will my dear Miss Richingford, said I, excuse my impertinence in thus obtruding on her retirement ? With a sweet smile she answered, I not only forgive you, sir, but thank you, as
you

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you have prevented my thoughts from dwelling longer on my letter, which at the same time it gives me pleasure, gives me pain. I again took her hand, which she had withdrawn. It is from some particular friend then I imagine, madam? It is, sir, she replied, from a lady whom I have known some years, and who has been at the point of death; and indeed I had reason to fear I had lost, from her long silence: you may perhaps know her, it is Lady Wimbleton. I have not the honour of being personally known to her ladyship, said I, though I have heard much of her; I hope she is now perfectly recovered? She tells me she is; but I have reason to think the contrary, from her style of writing. Do you know her sister pray, madam? I never had the pleasure of seeing her, sir, but know her to be possessed of many amiable qualities. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew now joined us, and soon afterwards Miss Garthron, one
of

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of the maiden ladies I mentioned above.
My friend and I now took leave.

Thus you see I have no longer occasion to fear a rival in this friend; though perhaps there may be one elsewhere. Lady Betty Bolton, I am certain, regards her with an envious eye; for I believe (vanity apart) she thought to catch me herself, but there she was mistaken; for if I had never seen Sophia Richingford, Lady Betty Bolton would never have been the woman of my choice. Who do you think Sir Andrew expects here in a few days? no other than Lord Raffle! I shall regard him with an evil eye on your account; it seems he is more Lady Betty's visitant than the Meads', as Sir Andrew only asked him out of complaisance to her. Methinks they had better make a match; though 'faith, bad as he is, I don't know whether he would put up with her ridiculous ladyship, unless it is for her large fortune.

I suppose

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I suppose he will be making overtures to Miss Richingford; but she shall not if I can help it, throw herself away on a gambler. Let me hear from you soon; remember me to your brother and Hervey, and believe me

Yours,

STANLEY.

I had like to have forgot my two boys; pray when any of you see them again, remember me to them, and lay out the enclosed trifle in some toy or other. Farewel.

LETTER XCVIII.

LORD WIMBLETON to R. RIVERS, Esq.

AFTER so long a silence I suppose you have intirely given me up; yet I hope, after having laid all my folly (fatal folly it has proved, and had near been

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been more so) before you, at the intercession of my lovely wife, I shall again be restored to your friendship. The machinations of Brooks did not begin till after our inviting them to town. Scarce had they been with us a week, when Sir William drew me to the gaming table, and with some of his emissaries choused me out of some hundreds.

Their next manœuvre was to intoxicate me with wine, so much that I never went home sober, nor till very late in the morning.

Finding so easy a prey, they introduced me to one who is a disgrace to her sex; and through his and Miss Brooks's insinuations concerning my wife, they persuaded me to take this woman into keeping.

They then made me think that Lady Wimbleton only waited for a fit opportunity to elope with Lord Revel, whom both Sir William and his sister assured me,

me, my lady preferred to me. At times I determined to go and upbraid the lovely sufferer with her perfidy; then again, insist on satisfaction from Lord Revel. This I suppose alarmed them, as they always put me off, begging me not to expose her till I was thoroughly assured of her guilt. At intervals when I had the clear use of my senses, I have looked on her and said to myself, it is impossible; she cannot be guilty of what they accuse her of! At that instant Revel has entered, and though I never saw the least thing in their behaviour to give me cause for suspicion, yet through the poisonous serpents, who were always at my ear, I have again returned to my former suspicions.

One evening in particular, they persuaded me to appear at the opera with her whom Sir William had introduced me to. I was at last prevailed on, and as I thought (knowing Lady Wimbleton would

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would be there) that she would have enquired who the lady was that I was so familiar with at the opera, I determined to acquaint her with my suspicions concerning Lord Revel. This I was fool enough to tell to Brooks, who took care to render me incapable of speaking myself, or of hearing the poor suffering angel, had she spoke to me. The next morning, when reason had again resumed her empire, I determined to dress, and send for my lady and talk with her.

Weak fool as I was! this resolve was as easily broke as formed; for on Brooks's entrance and begging me to wait some time longer, I suffered him to lead me down to the breakfast parlour, where I knew I should not be one moment alone. I was uneasy and sat in fullen silence. I observed my wife, and saw the trickling tear steal down her cheek, which she in vain endeavoured to hide. This again determined me, and on her getting up to

leave the room, I told her I would dine at home. After her departure I fell into a profound reverie, which I was soon awakened from by Miss Brooks. To make as short as possible of this horrid tale, they by art, best known to themselves, persuaded me to set off for Bath immediately, without any previous notice to my lady; having desired that he and his sister would watch her narrowly, and when they found every thing prepared for her elopement with Lord Revel, (which they were certain would be the case) Sir William would let me know, when I was instantly to send orders to have her carried down to my seat in the north, and there confined.

Shocked as I was at this sort of proceeding, yet through persuasion I consented to it. Lady Mary Manly on enquiring for my lady, was told she was in some of the rooms with Lord Revel. I soon after quitted the house, only leaving
a verbal

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a verbal message with Miss Brooks, to tell my lady I should not dine at home.

I found every thing prepared for our trip to Bath, at the house where my mistress resided, yet were my eyes not opened. A kind of stupefaction took possession of my senses, and I suffered Brooks to pen a billet to my wife to let her know where I was gone, which I copied; though so ignorant was I, nay, am still of the contents, that had it been a death warrant I should have signed it with equal indifference.

We sat off and travelled with great expedition till late that night; but the next evening as we were sitting at an inn waiting for some refreshment, one of my servants entered from town, and told me Lady Wimbleton was dangerously ill. I instantly jumped up, and 'spite of all the artful blandishments of my unhappy companion, returned back post for town. But an evil genius still presided over me,

for through the darkness of the night, the post-boys mistook the road, and drove us several miles out of the way, for which reason I did not get to town till late the next night. I went to my lady's apartment, but found her insensible to every one around her. She repeatedly called upon my name, and begged me to save her from him. I thought it was Revel she meant, and tried all in my power to soothe her. After some time, being quite spent, she sunk on her pillow; when I asked the poor weeping Eliza, who sat by the bedside, if she knew if Sir William and Miss Brookswere gone to bed. Never shall I forget the angelic sufferer at this moment, she started up in her bed, and grasping her mother's hand, exclaimed, Oh! save, save me from him, for God's sake do! Then clasping her hands, Ah! Wimbleton, Wimbleton! did you know my distress, you would not leave me thus.

Heaven,

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Heaven, Bob! what did I not feel at this moment! I would have taken her hand; but tearing it away, she screamed so loudly for help, that she reduced us all nearly to her own condition. Being quite exhausted, she sunk on her pillow senseless. I thought she was gone for ever. What torments did I feel! I know not what passed, but I was put to bed. The night I spent, is easier conceived than described. Toward morning I got some sleep, which greatly refreshed me. I arose and went to my lady, whom I found still insensible, though not raving. I took her hand; she looked earnestly at me, but said nothing. I then went down stairs, and enquired for Brooks, but was told by the servants they had seen nothing of them since the day before. I examined the servants severally, but could get no intelligence of them. I again went up stairs, when, in looking over some papers which lay upon my wife's dressing-table,

I found a letter directed to her sealed up. Her maid, who was by, told me her lady had brought up that letter the night she was taken ill. I was going to lay it down again, thinking it a letter from some of her friends, when observing a black seal with Sir William's arms and crest, I instantly opened it, and I read the enclosed. In a moment I conceived the whole, and found that all that the villain had insinuated to me, was to get me out of the way, that he might the more easily seduce my wife.

I execrated myself, and verily believe should have put an end to my existence, had it not been for Lady Mary Manly, who having at length pacified, left me.

I then determined to go in search of Brooks; I met with him at the coffee house, and desired to speak with him in private. He insolently told me he should have gloried in seducing my wife, as he found me so *easy* a dupe to his artifice.

A

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A great deal more past, which I do not recollect. I insisted on satisfaction: what followed, the papers have already informed you.

After this I attended closely on my poor Arabella, whose life for ten days was despaired of; at length it pleased the Almighty to spare her, to our united prayers, and I have the unspeakable satisfaction to inform you she is now perfectly recovered. I besought her forgiveness, which was no sooner asked than granted; nor will she for a moment permit me to upbraid myself for the loss we have sustained.

Lord Revel, of whose innocence I am now fully convinced, has been here to take his leave, previous to his departure for Ireland. The wretched Miss Brooks is gone to her friend Miss Laroach at Paris, whither her brother will follow as soon as his health will permit.

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For the sake of my dear Lady Wimbleton, I wish this unhappy affair could have been kept a secret, but that is impossible; it has freed this nation from two wretches who are a disgrace to it; as they can never, at least for some-years, shew their faces here.

Let me have an answer to this as soon as possible; if in person the more agreeable. My angel joins me in this desire, as I long to embrace you and hear my forgiveness for all past transgressions.

Yours sincerely,

H. WIMBLETON,

LETTER XCIX.

The Hon. E. WESTON to — STANLEY, Esq.

I Give you joy, my friend, of having lost your heart. Little did I think your journey to Cumberland would have reduced

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reduced you to a sighing, whining lover. Thank heaven! I have not yet experienced Cupid's chains. Upon honour my wife brother is enough to sicken one from becoming one of the sighing tribe.

To-day, for instance, he is like one beside himself, because forsooth he is to dine at the old Earl's, who tells him he shall introduce him to his intended wife. He swears he cannot marry her if she is ever such an angel; for he can never forget Miss Watson. I have told him, and tell him still, that if he don't like her, I will; for let her be as ugly as a witch, I'll fall desperately in love with her, and sure there is no such a difference between us, but if I try for it, I may get into her good graces as well as he. He laughs at me, but heeds me not: so much for his affairs. Now for news.

In the first place, Lady Wimbleton is perfectly recovered. What a vile part did the Brooks's act; they always bore a vile character,

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character, but this last affair has quite done for them. It is openly said that Miss Brooks was in love with his lordship on her first seeing him; it is most likely this was the case, but particulars of the story I cannot learn.

My lord and lady are preparing for the Lodge, where Miss Watson is to accompany them: this is what Hervey told me this morning. It is odd enough that you should have stumbled on such an intimate friend of Lady Wimbleton's: I wish you success with her, nor do I at all doubt it.

Your two boys I saw yesterday, they are really fine children; they told me they longed to see you, and were afraid you had forgot them; I carried them some toys, which delighted them much. I must now dress; and as I know you will like to hear what passes at the Earl's, will not close this till my return.

Fast

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Past one in the morning.

Late as it is, cannot go to bed without imparting to you a piece of news, which cannot fail of being agreeable. About five we adjourned to the Earl of Wallbrook's; my poor brother's face too plainly shewed the pangs his heart underwent. We (that is, my lord, Hervey, and your humble servant) entered the drawing room, where we found only the Earl and Lady Catherine Worthy. He received us with the utmost good humour, and had but just desired us to be seated, when a loud rapping at the door announced somebody coming. Poor George sat down, as did Hervey; not so Ned, but hastening to the window, I was surprised to see the Wimbleton livery; my lord jumped from the carriage, and handed out the Countess of Chorlebury, Lady Mary Manly and Lady Wimbleton. I looked towards Hervey; but

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poor

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poor George did not dare turn his head. They entered; when our fly uncle having paid his compliments to these separately, took the hand of Lady Mary, saying, give me leave, madam, to present Lord Weston to you. She curt'fied; he bow'd; and both looked very silly. It instantly popped into my wise noddle, that lady Mary was my destined sister, and when I viewed her ladyship, thought it next to an impossibility my brother could refuse her. Such were my thoughts, when the door flew open, and Mr. Mrs. and Miss Watson were announced. The lovely Eliza, with downcast eyes followed her father and mother. The Earl was just advancing to pay his compliments to her, when lifting up her eyes, she saw me; she started! but on turning them to the right and perceiving my brother, an instantaneous paleness appeared on her cheek, and she would have fallen to the ground, had not my brother flew to her

her assistance. We all looked surprised, but the Earl, Countess of Chorlebury, Mr. and Mrs. Watson, and Lady Catherine Worthy.

She soon recovered, when the Earl advancing, and taking her hand, "So you know Lord Weston already! fair lady?" She started, and repeated, "Lord Weston, sir!"

My brother now found the use of his tongue, and bending one knee to the ground, he said, "It is indeed the unhappy Weston you now behold, madam, for the name of Farmborough was fictitious."

"Why unhappy, George? (resumed the Earl) I hope you will not call yourself so when I tell you, this is the lady I wish you to marry, provided she likes Lord Weston as well as Captain Farmborough."

Suffice it to say, Stanley, that the whole was a plot between the Earl and Mr. Watson

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Watson to bring them together by surprise.

I now advanced, and paid my compliments to Miss Watson, when she was equally surprised to find me the brother instead of friend. In short (for I am a horrid one at describing a love scene) every thing is agreed, and they are to be married with all convenient speed.

I really, Stanley, am too sleepy to proceed. Let me hear from you soon. George and Hervey write by to-morrow's post, therefore what I have omitted you will hear from them.

Yours,

E. WESTON.

LETTER

LETTER C.

Miss RICHINGFORD to LADY
WIMBLETON.

TO express the mixture of pain and pleasure your last gave me, my dear friend, is impossible: I still fear you are far from well. O that my uncle would but let me come to you, with what pleasure should I hasten to town, with the hope of once more beholding my Arabella!

I am weary of my confinement. Sir Toby is more strict than ever, he will hardly suffer me even to go to Mead Hall without him. But even there I don't experience the pleasure I used to do; every thing is changed; a new visitor is lately come, a Lord Raffle. He is a most insufferable coxcomb, at least in my mind, yet does he continually pester me with his odious addreses, and what alarms
me

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me more is, that my uncle seems to encourage them.

Lady Betty Bolton treats me with insufferable neglect, while Stanley watches my every look and motion, and seems to wish to speak, but cannot. Sir Andrew and Lady Mead indeed behave to me with the same obliging attention they did at first, but every other face is changed. Ah! a letter from my dear Lady Wimpleton! I must lay down my pen to peruse it.

A thousand thanks for the dear contents, which not only assure me of your perfect recovery, but of your amiable sister's happiness. Good heaven! what a strange affair, that Lord Weston should disguise his name, and that things should be brought about in so strange a way! As to the old Earl, I am quite in love with him, and if I was in town, should certainly set my cap at him.

Your

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Your letter has restored me to new life and spirits ; indeed they wanted something to rouse them, for they have been at a very low ebb for this month past.

To-morrow there is to be a ball at Mead Hall. I am to dance with Stanley, and Lady Betty with Lord Raffle. This is all the news I can write you ; and will subscribe myself, my dear Lady Wimbleton,

Your affectionate friend,

SOPHIA RICHINGFORD.

LETTER CI.

— STANLEY, Esq. to the Rt. Hon.
LORD WESTON.

TO express the real pleasure I feel at your being at length restored to happiness, my dear friend, is impossible. After all the severe trials you have undergone, you deserve it. May you soon experience

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perience all felicity in the married state, is my most sincere wish; and heaven forbid that any thing should intervene to disturb your domestic happiness. Let the anxiety and trouble the amiable Lady Wimbleton has gone through, be a warning to your lordship; let not that foul fiend jealousy have a moment's harbour in your breast, but at once crush the poisonous serpent to atoms, by detecting either the truth or falshood of his story. How careful ought we to be when we enter the married state; a state on which our future peace or misery depends; yet with what precipitancy do our people of fashion now marry, without once considering what they are about. But methinks I am grave, and for fear I should infect your lordship, will conclude here.

Yours sincerely,

——— STANLEY.

Remember me to Hervey; I write to Ned by the same post.

LETTER

LETTER CII.

STANLEY, Esq. to the Hon.
EDWARD WESTON.

IT is as I feared, Ned ; Lord Raffle has commenced my rival ; but whether he is favoured by the lovely Sophia is yet a doubt. Can she really think of throwing herself away on such a coxcomb ! yet I know not what to make of her ; not that she distinguishes him more than me, or any other man she converses with ; her conduct is alike to all. The other night Sir Andrew gave a ball ; Miss Richingford was my partner, and Lady Betty Bolton Lord Raffle's ; yet was I not happy. Sophia's face wore a gloom which entirely damped the joy I at first felt, at having so lovely a partner. The evening was dull and insipid, and after the third dance, she desired to sit down ; I bowed, and led her to a seat, unable to speak ; I seated myself

myself by her, and tried to think of some method to amuse her, but found it impossible. A profound silence was kept on both sides, till supper, when *she* took a part in the conversation: not so your friend, for I soon retired, pleading for an excuse, a pain in my head; though had I spoke the truth, I should have said in my heart. I sometimes think I will throw myself at her feet, and confess my passion, but the fear of a denial ties up my tongue. A few days will most probably decide whether Lord Raffle is a favoured lover or not. Sir Toby, I am certain, approves his lordship; but whether his niece will sacrifice her own peace to her uncle's choice, I know not. This I know, I am no favourite of the old don; though in what point I have offended I cannot divine: I at first imagined it was her fortune he was loath to part with; but that cannot be the case if he means to encourage Lord Raffle, for he

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he will find himself devilishly mistaken if he thinks *he* will take her without one, as it is reported to be very large. Gladly would I take her on that proviso, was I certain she had any regard for me.

I am interrupted; but will finish this in the evening. Adieu.

Nine o'Clock.

I have been looking over what I have written, but find it both stupid and unentertaining; for why should I pester you with a disagreeable affair? Yet the friendship you have always professed for me prompts me to lay my heart open before you. Could I have thought that this said love had been full of such intricate mazes, I would have shunned it with the most sedulous care. Why, cries my friend, did you not know what my poor brother suffered? True enough, Ned, I did; yet I had not
the

the precaution to guard myself from it. Behold but the lovely she that first induced my heart to stray! then condemn me if you can. The Watsons may be beautiful and surpass many women I have seen, I will allow; yet does Sophia Richingford, without having the regular features of a Watson, outdo them. Innocence beams from her eye, and the glow of health adorns her cheek without the least assistance of art. No affectation appears in her discourse; she delivers her sentiments with a modest dignity and natural elegance, only to be equalled by herself. No ostentatious pride appears when talking to the cottager, or uneasy stiffness when chatting to the peer. From this description do you think it possible to withstand such a world of charms? No, I confess it is not in my power, and without the lovely Sophia Richingford, I never can be happy. I would feign write on some other subject, but cannot, my
pen

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pen refuses its office ; therefore if you are tired of a lover's sorrows, I had best leave off ; but believe me when I assure you that whether in love or no, I shall always remain

Your sincere friend,

—— STANLEY.

LETTER CIII.

Miss WATSON to Miss NEWTON.

I Am going to make a request, nor must I be denied ; my sister with my dear Lord Weston joins me in desiring, nay insisting on your company ; you must not deny me, Harriot, for positively I cannot do without you.

They hurry me out of my life, and have fixed Tuesday se'nnight for the day of days. I have a shrewd suspicion we shall have another wedding soon ; for my
cousin

cousin don't seem to have the least dislike to Mr. Weston; nor do I think he has the least objection to her; they are both very suitable, as they have each prodigious spirits. I told Mary this morning I was sure she liked Edward Weston. Lord, Miss Watson, said she, tossing up her head, what made you take such a notion as that in your head? At that moment he entered. Her cheeks were now tinged with a deeper dye than before, and she was hastening out of the room, when he caught her hand, exclaiming, Heavens! Lady May, whence that clouded brow? Have I done any thing to offend you? He ventured to lead her to a seat, and by his lively chat soon brought her to herself; and she soon found opportunity to repay me with interest.

Good heaven! my Harriot, a few weeks ago what torments did I endure! uncertain of the life of a dear and amiable

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able sister, and uncertain if I should not be forced to marry a man who was hateful to me; for such every man would have been, except Lord Weston.

How dangerous is deceit! How many ills it is productive of! How much has my poor sister suffered by that deceitful Miss Brooks; and though Weston's was quite in a different way, yet did he not, and might he not have suffered still more by it? but enough; methinks I am growing grave, therefore will conclude with the request of seeing you as soon as possible.

Yours affectionately,

ELIZA WATSON,

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LETTER

LETTER CIV.

The Hon. E. WESTON to — STANLEY, Esq.

I Cannot think what ails me, Stanley ; it is my opinion I am in love. It is strange I should feel such violent palpitations at the sight of Lady Mary Manly ; but so it is. When she is near, I have neither eyes nor ears for any other object ; but the moment she is gone, a stupefaction seizes and benumbs all my senses. My brother assures me I am in love, and wishes me to speak to my uncle ; but I cannot say I am in a humour for matrimony just now : it is a dangerous voyage.

Her ladyship's disposition and mine suit amazingly, as she is lively and cheerful to a degree. Miss Watson gives her a most amiable character, and I believe she deserves it. If I offer myself and am rejected,

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rejected, I shall be provoked; and I have no right to suppose otherwise, being a younger brother. In short, Stanley, I want your advice.

We are all as soon as my lord's nuptials are celebrated, to set off for Wimbeldon Lodge. Now I think the wisest way is to stay till we get there, when, *in some shady grove*, or by the side of a *purling stream*, I may declare my love to the charming maid, and be graciously received; whereas if I offer myself here, where she is surrounded by her admirers, I may be refused. Give me your advice, and I'll be guided by it. I pity you greatly, but think you to blame that you don't offer yourself to Miss Richingford; surely Sir Toby can have no objection to give his niece to you. If Sophia indeed was to refuse you, fly the country; but by what you say I can't think she would. If she is the woman of sense you have drawn her, she can never think of mar-

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rying such a man as Lord Raffle, whose character, unless greatly reformed, is known by every one.

Your brother's affairs I am told are in a very bad way ; he is deeply in debt ; every one talks of an execution being soon laid in his house. Lady Scamper goes on just as usual, and I am credibly informed, her debts of honour exclusive of all others, amount to near a thousand pounds. What they intend to do is best known to themselves. It is astonishing to me, that two own brothers, as you are, can be of such opposite dispositions. I seldom see him, but saw his lady last night at Ranelagh. She rouges immoderately, which I think a great pity ; I must own I shall be very sorry if my wife (whoever she is to be) uses rouge, as I should much rather see her with her own natural complexion, let it be ever so pale, than make use of that poisonous stuff. I believe, nay am sure, that Lady Mary uses
it,

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it, but think it a pity that parents suffer their children to use it; I know if ever I have daughters, and the fashion still continues, I will not suffer them to use the least degree of paint. This is my resolution, and so fare ye well, my friend, and believe me

Yours,

E. WESTON.

LETTER CV.

LADY WIMBLETON to Miss
RICHINGFORD.

I Am sorry to find by my Sophia's last letter, that the disagreeableness of her situation encreases instead of diminishing. Indeed, my dear, I pity you greatly; I don't know what to make of Mr. Stanley, that he don't speak either to you or your uncle, for he is certainly in love with you; as you undoubtedly

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are

are with him. Nay, my dear, it is even so: I can't think you have the least occasion to fear a rival in Lady Betty Bolton. A man of sense can never expect any permanent happiness with a woman of her ladyship's character. I have heard a great deal of her lately from one who knows her intimately; she was entirely spoilt by the Earl her father, who indulged her in every fashionable extravagance. She was presented at a very early age, and never missed any public resort. Being of high rank and very handsome, great homage was paid her, by her superiors as well as inferiors; the latter of whom she could never hate enough, and thought those about her scarce worthy to touch the hem of her garment. You may imagine this behaviour gained her very little if any esteem. The lady who told me the above, has scarce seen her since her father's death; therefore says from the example set her by Lady Mead she may
be

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be altered ; but by your account I don't think she is. She would certainly have been married ere now, had not her affectation and pride deterred any gentleman from venturing on her.

Did our young female quality but know how much good humour and affability became them, they never would be the contrary. I think were I the first lady in the land, I should feel an inward constraint, if I knew my behaviour created disgust and hatred instead of respect ; for where there is no love there can be no fear. But pardon me for thus troubling you with my remarks. My sister will soon be Lady Weston, when we propose going to Lodge for the summer. O that your cross uncle would but let you join us. Mr. Weston is very intimate with Mr. Stanley, and praises him much, but he is not alone, as his brother and Mr. Hervey do the same, who are more to be depended on than the volatile

H 4

Edward.

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Edward. He is one of the drollest men I ever met with, but I believe has a very good heart; he seems to admire my cousin Lady Mary much, and she seems to like him equally. Lady Catherine Worthy, with the Earl of Wallbrook, promote the match: I believe they are suitable to each other; I wish it may take place.

I forgot to mention Lord Raffle, but sure your fears are groundless in regard to your uncle wishing you to marry him; a man whom all the world know to be so fond of gaming. He certainly means only to try Mr. Stanley, by seeming to approve the addresses of his lordship, as he never can think of giving my Sophia to a man of Lord Raffle's principles. I must again repeat, I wish you was here, when we should soon find a method to restore you to your former spirits. Lord Wimbleton bids me tell you he will with great pleasure take a trip to Richingford Abbey,

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Abbey, and prevail on your uncle to let him conduct you to the Lodge. Do, my dear, let me know in your next if this scheme will succeed; believe me, it will be one of the greatest pleasures I can at this moment enjoy, the embracing my dear friend. Adieu, my dear.

A. WIMBLETON.

LETTER CVI.

Miss RICHINGFORD to LADY
WIMBLETON.

Richingford Abbey.

I Have received my dear Lady Wimbleton's favour this morning, and would not delay writing immediately to prevent Lord Wimbleton from taking so long a journey, as it would avail nothing; for I am confident my uncle will never let me depart from the Abbey but on his own

H 5 conditions,

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conditions, which *conditions* I can never consent to. Would you believe it, my dear! he insists on my marrying Lord Raffle, who has applied to him; but I have peremptorily refused him. I wish to write you the particulars, but scarce know how. His lordship first spoke to me; I told him I was very sensible of the honour he did me, but at the same time could not accept him. He smiled, and said it was an answer he expected, but that he thought it but right to speak to me before he applied to my uncle. I scarce knew what to make of him, but knowing him an odd genius, thought he would take no more notice of me; but here I was mistaken, for this morning at breakfast, Sir Toby said, Sophia, I have had an exceeding good offer for you from Lord Raffle. It is true, I never intended marrying you to any of the London macaronies, as I think a plain country squire with a good estate, far preferable; but this

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this war has turned all their heads, and all the young country gentlemen have entered into the militia; and as to an old man, I would not offer you; therefore as I think Lord Raffle tollerable for a man of fashion, I desire you will receive him for your destined husband.

I am much obliged to you, sir, said I, for your intended favour, but at the same time cannot accept it, as his lordship is the last man I can think of in that light.

"Hey! what do you mean by this, is he not good enough for you?"

"In point of rank he certainly is, but not in point of morals, as I think I should ill deserve the large fortune my papa left me, was I to give it to one who would gamble it away in a few nights time, at one of the fashionable houses in St. James's Street."

"What do you mean by that? if he did gamble a little before marriage, that is no rule he should afterwards."

H 6

"Gaming

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“ Gaming is a *vice* seldom given up ;
“ and I am determined not to give my
“ hand to Lord Raffle.”

“ You are ! and *I* am equally deter-
“ mined you shan’t give it to any one
“ else.”

He left me to my own reflections, which
you may be sure were not very pleasing ;
but I was soon interrupted by the en-
trance of his lordship. I would have left
the room, but seizing me by the hand,
he begged I would stay and hear him.
He ran on a great deal, and concluded
with telling me, “ He had applied to my
“ uncle, and had his consent to pay his
“ addressee to me.”

“ His consent alone, (said I) my lord,
“ won’t do, you must have mine, and
“ that I can assure you, you never will.”

“ O ! retract that cruel word, (cried
“ the puppy) that cruel word *never* ; it is
“ a dagger to my heart.”

“ I told

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"I told you, my lord, some days ago, that you must never think of me for a wife; I now repeat it, and beg from this time I may never hear more on that topic."

"You amaze me, madam, as I took what you said the other day to be merely the effect of modesty, owing to your being bred up in the country."

I did not think it worth my while to answer him, but left the room. We were to dine at Mead-Hall, but I sent to desire my uncle would make my excuse to Sir Andrew and Lady Mead.

I cannot bear the sight of Lord Raffle, nor will I marry him, let the consequence be what it will. Sir Toby was very loath to go without me, but finding me obstinate, was forced to comply. He is not come home yet.

I am happy to hear your sister is so near the completion of her happiness. The sketch you have drawn of Lady Betty Bolton,

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Bolton, is I believe very just, nor do I think she is in the least altered. Lady Mead I fancy regrets the necessity she is under of having so much of her company, nor do I think either her ladyship or Sir Andrew would object to seeing her the wife of Stanley; as they often say, were she married to a sensible good kind of man, she might easily be prevailed on to leave off all those foolish habits which fashion alone has accustomed her to.

I must say, that putting the regard I have for Mr. Stanley out of the question, I should be sorry for him to have such a woman as Lady Betty for a wife. That she bears me a mortal hatred, I am certain, though for what cause I cannot divine; when we meet she treats me with a neglect bordering on contempt. Lady Mead sees this, and I am sure is very much hurt by it, as she tries to make it up to me by numberless little assiduities.

How

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How little do we know, my dear Arabella what is for our good? How much I wished for the arrival of this family, and how little pleasure have I received by it! This I know, I have never been myself since they came. I hear my uncle's voice, so must conclude in haste.

Yours,

SOPHIA RICHINGFORD.

LETTER CVII.

LORD RAFFLE to LORD SCAMPER.

Mead-Hall.

I Wish to the Lord, Scamper, you would contrive some method to draw your brother to town, for I shall never succeed with this girl till he is gone, and 'faith I am almost tired of being here, though you tell me in your last that the town is almost empty. I offered myself to her, but was absolutely refused; however,

ever, I met with better success from her uncle, whose good graces I have had the good fortune to gain, and he assures me she shall be mine. How he intends to manage I know not, as she can demand her fortune when of age, whether she marries or not; but then she will never have a penny of his money; not that she I suppose values such a consideration, as her own fortune is reputed to be eighty thousand pounds. A fine one, is it not? by jingo if I had it, it would set me up again at a certain house in your neighbourhood.

I verily believe though if it was not for you I should be tempted to give her up, but I think your brother would have her then: it is certainly for your interest to keep him unmarried if you can. Lady Betty Bolton I know is very much in love with Stanley, and is foolish enough to think if the lovely Sophia was out of the way, he would have her; but in this
I believe

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I believe she is mistaken. She hates Miss Richingford as bad as poison, and indeed spares no pains to shew it; yet I know not why, as Stanley has not, to my certain knowledge, offered himself yet, nor do I think if he does, he will be accepted of by Sir Toby, if he is by the niece.

All I am afraid of is, they will take a trip to Scotland; then I may go to the devil for what they care. In such a case I must make up to Lady Betty, whose beauty of person and large fortune, more than equal Miss Richingford's; but their dispositions are as different as fire and water.

Lady Betty will make a downright fashionable wife; but Sophia would be a social companion as well as wife, there lies the difference. She must make a lasting impression, while Lady Betty's is but transitory.

I am sorry to find by your last, your affairs are in so bad a situation, but
think

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think were you to write to your brother, he would assist you. I know it is a hard task to bring one's self to stoop to a younger brother, but yet necessity has no law.

I must own I am not sorry to hear the Westons are restored to their uncle's good graces, as I could not help a twinge every time I thought of them. They certainly were not used fairly, not that I was alone; I believe Stanley regards me with an evil eye on their account. He seemed surprised this morning when I said I was going to write to Lord Scamper, if he had any commands. He answered, he was obliged to me, but would not give me the trouble. I fancy he did not think we were so intimate. The dinner bell rings, so fare ye well.

ARCHER RAFFLE.

LETTER

LETTER CVIII.

— STANLEY, Esq. to the Hon.
EDWARD WESTON.

NED, I am almost bereft of my senses.

Lord Raffle has made an offer to Miss Richingford, and by what I can learn, though not absolutely accepted, is not rejected. I know not what to do ; if I proffered my hand and was refused, it would hurt me much ; besides, how can I well, when I am told she is engaged to another. Yet sure it cannot be, she never can consent to marry Lord Raffle. He told me this morning, to my great surprise, he was going to write to my brother. I did not know they were so intimate. I am very sorry his affairs are in so bad a situation, but it certainly is his own fault, as I have done all in my power to reclaim him. This lady is scarce worth notice ; she has certainly helped to ruin him, but
she

she had an undoubted right to spend some of the large fortune she brought him, though had she been a prudent woman she would have reserved a part against a rainy day. I suppose the next step is the giving up her jointure, which I know is considerable. I think Lady Betty Bolton will be the very counterpart of my sister-in-law whenever she marries; I now dislike her more than ever. Her behaviour to Miss Richingsford is insolent to a degree. Sophia sees it, and flights her in return. Raffle called them once the rival beauties, and with reason, on Lady Betty's side, who hates her most cordially, I verily believe. But had she made herself agreeable to Sophia, I think there would have been no envy in her breast. They seldom meet, as they seem to avoid each other.

Sir Toby is to dine here to day, when I shall watch Miss Richingsford narrowly, and if I perceive any discontent on her brow,

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brow, I will take an opportunity to speak to her; if she refuses me, I shall set off for town immediately. You ask my advice about Lady Mary; from the little I know of her, I think her agreeable, but as you say matrimony is a dangerous voyage, and requires some study, you had better stay till you are confident you prefer her ladyship to all her sex? You seem to think she will not accept a younger brother. Your family in point of birth is equal to hers, and you have reason to think your uncle will make your fortune considerable, therefore if she esteems you, that will be no obstacle; as you are so soon to go to the Lodge you may as well, as you say, wait for *purling streams*, and *shady groves*, as it may induce her not to keep you in suspense. I hear Sir Toby Richingford's voice, so will conclude here for the present.

Seven

Seven o'clock.

I am both pleased and vexed; you may think I was the latter when Sir Toby told Lady Mead that his niece would not come. When Sir Andrew came down, he asked were Miss Richingsford was; why, answered he, she is in the dumps, and will not come out; any one would imagine she would have been glad to have been married, for she was always begging me to let her go to town, and now I would give her a husband, she will not have him forsooth; but the baggage shall, or I'll know why. Lord Raffle and Lady Betty now came in and put a stop to his discourse, but I wanted no more, my spirits were quite elated at what he had said, and to-morrow morning I shall pay her a visit; if she accepts me, I shall be superlatively happy, though suppose shall have some difficulty with the old don; yet I know not why; I think I may venture

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venture to say my morals are not worse than Lord Raffle's, and if Sophia approves me, he can have no reasonable objection. Adieu; if I am successful I shall write again immediately; if the contrary, shall be in town the latter end of the week.

Yours,

STANLEY.

LETTER CIX.

LADY WIMBLETON to Miss
RICHINGFORD.

MY heart bleeds for the distress of my dear Sophia; but time I hope will deliver you, as it has my sister and me. She yesterday resigned her liberty to Lord Weston: may all happiness be their lot. He certainly doats on her, and if nothing happens to disturb their domestic peace, they

they cannot fail of being happy. To-morrow we set out for the Lodge, where I beg your next may be directed; papa and mamma also set off to-morrow for Elm-Wood, where we propose paying them a visit before the summer is out. Our party for the Lodge is as follows: Lord and Lady Weston, Lady Mary Manly, and Mr. Edward Weston; it will be a very agreeable one, and would be rendered still more so, if it was in the power of Miss Richingford and Mr. Stanley to augment it. How cruel is it that Lord Raffle must come just now, for were it not for him, Sir Toby could have no excuse for not encouraging the addresses of Mr. Stanley, whom Mr. Weston assures me is very much in love with you, and has only been hindered from telling how much he admires you, on account of Lord Raffle, whom he was not sure but you might accept. Now, my dear, therefore is his time, as you have refused his lordship,

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lordship, and I don't doubt but the next letter will inform me of it. Stanley's brother, Lord Scamper, is involved greatly; his lady likewise owes large sums, and every body thinks an execution will be laid in the house. His brother it seems has helped him several times, but at present they are at variance, and have not seen each other for some time. How shocking is it when relations fall out, but it is too much the *ton* at present. I can make this but short, as we have promised to spend as much of the day as possible at the Earl of Walbrook's, where all our friends will meet.

Lady Catherine Worthy has been very poorly for some time, and her physicians wish her to go to Bristol. I have a great esteem for her, and was she to die, I should mourn her loss sincerely. Her friends are afraid of a consumption, and indeed I fear it too, as she is grown very thin, and has a continual cough. I don't know

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I

how

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how it is, but I feel distressed when I think of parting with her. My lord calls, so must leave off. Pray, my dear, don't fail writing, as I shall wait with anxious impatience for a letter.

Yours sincerely,

A. WIMBLETON.

LETTER CX.

STANLEY, Esq. to the Hon.
EDWARD WESTON.

FROM one of the most miserable, I am become the happiest of mortals; I am assured of my Sophia's love, and can I wish for more? The morning after I dispatched my last, I went to the Abbey, and had the good fortune to find Miss Richingford alone. She was reading a letter when I entered. A blush over-
spread

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spread her cheeks, and she hurried the paper in her pocket.

After some trifling discourse, I mentioned Lord Raffle's disappointment at being rejected by her, and at the same time I ventured to make an avowal of my own passion, adding, that although a refusal would render my life insupportable, she might be assured I never would urge her against her inclination. After some little more chat, I had the unspeakable satisfaction to find she was not averse to me, and have her permission to speak to her uncle.

He was gone about ten miles off, and I was told he would return but just time enough for dinner, therefore was forced to delay talking to him till this day. I have not yet been summoned to breakfast, but as soon as it is over, will go to the Abbey. Heaven prosper me, and grant me success! for should I meet with

I 2

a repulse,

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a repulse, I verily believe I should persuade her to run away.

I am sorry at what you tell me of my brother : unthinking man ! I wish to serve him, but must not hurt myself. He has squandered away large sums of my money. His children I should wish to take care of, more I cannot, as it will be a long time before they can earn their own living ; and it shall be my care to see that they want for nothing till that time arrives. I am called to breakfast. Farewel for the present.

Two o'clock.

It is as I feared, I am obstinately refused by Sir Toby. He will give no cause for his dislike, but will not consent to my having his niece. He insisted on my never entering his doors again, and swore vehemently that if he found out

Miss

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Miss Richingford held any converse with me, he would lock her up.

I was forced to leave the house without seeing her; but have contrived to have a letter conveyed to her by one of the servants; you will be surprised when I tell you I have already ventured to mention an elopement. I wait with impatience for an answer. I have not mentioned here yet my having solicited Sir Toby for his niece, on account of Lord Raffle; besides, I verily believe Sir Andrew and Lady Mead want to draw me in to marry their Ward, which I would not do were there not another woman in England.

Lady Betty for these two days past has watched me very narrowly, and strove as far as lay in her power, to make herself agreeable. She forced a good humoured affability, (which was not at all natural to her) all day yesterday, and this morning at breakfast asked me to drive her in

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the phaeton; but I refused, telling her I was forced to call at Sir Toby Richingford's. She coloured, but replied not. Soon after I got there Lord Raffle came to the gate, but I went away before he came in. Whether the old hunks told him or no I know not, but shall be able to judge at dinner, as I came in without seeing any body. I shall wait with great impatience for the evening, when I hope the lovely Sophia will comply with my request, which was to meet me at Farmer Ludlow's, as we can better confide in them than any others.

O, Ned, this love is the devil! how many perplexities does it draw us into? I must again break off, as it is dinner time, but will not seal it till I can tell you the result of my conversation with the lovely Sophia, which heaven avert I should be disappointed in.

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Eight o'clock—Evening.

Instead of my charmer I found the following:

SIR,

I little imagined I should ever be under the necessity of holding a clandestine correspondence with one of your sex, but find myself, by the cruel treatment I now experience without any justifiable cause, in some measure forced to give up punctilios. My good uncle has very obligingly debarred me the use of pen, ink, and paper; though you see I have procured them. He has likewise insisted I should not dare to stir out without his permission, (which by the bye I may wait long enough for) nor hold converse with any one but in his presence. This is an horrible constraint upon one of my disposition, and will in time force me to be desperate; as to what you mention

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concerning an elopement, I cannot bear the thoughts of it at present. I must beg you, sir, to forward the enclosed letter to Lady Wimbleton as soon as possible, as likewise her answer to me; as I have taken the liberty to desire her to direct under cover to you. I send this by my maid to Mrs. Ludlow's, and she will call in a day or two for an answer to the enclosed. I hope none will come by the post in the mean time from her, as I have every reason to think my uncle will open such letters as may chance to fall into his hands. Your fears concerning Lord Raffle are entirely groundless, as no power on earth shall compel me to give my hand to his lordship.

I am, sir, &c.

SOPHIA RICHINGFORD.

There is her letter; I shall seal this and the enclosed to Lady Wimbleton in one
cover

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cover directed to you, and walk to the town to avoid suspicion, (as I believe I have my spies too) and deliver it to a man I think I can trust to go post with it to you. I hope her ladyship will send the answer back by the man, as I dare say it is to ask her advice. Farewel, and believe me

Yours,

STANLEY.

LETTER CXI.

Miss RICHINGFORD to LADY
WIMBLETON.

(Enclosed in the foregoing)

WOULD you believe it, my dear friend, I am at this moment obliged to my maid for procuring me pen and ink! my wise uncle having denied me the use of them. Mr. Stanley has offered himself, and though not refused by me,

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is by my uncle. He vows I shall never have him, though he can assign no reason, he owns himself, for it. I am not to stir out without him, nor see any one but in his presence; nor are any of the servants suffered to come near me but my maid, who makes him believe she is wholly in his and Lord Raffle's interest. I have already a letter from Mr. Stanley by her contrivance, wherein he urges me to take a trip to Scotland with him: I know not what to do. I am not a friend to running away with a man; yet under these circumstances I think I am excusable; however I am determined to wait for an answer from you, wherein I beg you will give me your advice, and tell me how to act.

You must direct under cover to Mr. Stanley, (as my uncle will open all letters addressed to me here) who forwards this to you. I have no need I am certain to beg you to be speedy. My spirits
are

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are tolerable as yet, but how long they will continue so I know not, if this is the life I am to lead. I received your kind letter, which I thank you for. Farewel, my dear friend, and believe me

Yours,

SOPHIA RICHINGFORD.

LETTER CXII.

LADY WIMBLETON to Miss
RICHINGFORD.

GOOD Heaven! my Sophia, how unhappy the receipt of your last has made me, which came inclosed in one to Mr. Weston. Fly, my love, by all means from this tyranic uncle. Were it any other man than Mr. Stanley, I should not give you this advice, but am certain you may confide in his honour. As soon as the ceremony is performed, hasten to

I 6 Wimble-

Wimbleton Lodge, where I with the rest of my friends, though all strangers to you, will receive you with open arms.

When you are united, Sir Toby will relent, and receive you with renewed affection; but supposing he should not, he cannot hinder you of your fortune when of age. Were he a father indeed, I should be loath to give you such advice; but as it is, you are not to sacrifice your peace of mind. Where it is not a duty, I am far from approving the many runaway matches one daily hears of, where there is a father and mother; for though I should blame any woman to be compelled to give her hand without her heart, yet they ought to wait with patience, and not give themselves away without their parents' consent. I return this by the man whom Mr. Stanley sent post with your letter, and shall expect in a short time to have the pleasure of embracing you under the title of Mrs. Stanley.

Adieu,

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Adieu, my sweet friend : that heaven
may preserve you from all harm, will be
the constant prayer of

Your affectionate

A. WIMBLETON.

LETTER CXIII.

The Hon. LORD WESTON to ———
STANLEY, Esq.

Wimbleton-Lodge.

WELL done, Stanley ! I did not think
you had been such a man of spirit ;
but I find when a woman is in the case,
even a Stanley will dare any thing. Seri-
ously I commend your resolution much,
and wish you success most sincerely, as I
make not the least doubt Miss Riching-
ford will soon be tired of her confine-
ment, and will be very willing to accom-
pany you to *Gretna Green*. Would to
Heav'n I could persuade my little Mary
to

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to do the same ! not that I fear a repulse from her friends, provided I have her consent ; but think the novelty of the thing would be very pleasing to her disposition.

Upon my soul, Stanley, I perfectly adore this Woman, and cannot live without her, for by residing under the same roof I have discovered numberless perfections, which were not perceptible before ; but the elegance of her conversation, with the enchanting affability which accompanies her every word and action, would make her irresistible were she without any of the graces which nature has bestowed on her. In this point likewise has she been lavish of her favours: I wish I were a poet, would give you a description of her in verse ; but as I have no talent for any thing of the sort, you must have patience till you see her, for the verification of my account.

This

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This spot at present is delightful, and our party so agreeable, that we can scarce fail of being happy ; yet how vain is all human felicity ! content is a rare jewel. I wish I may be wrong ; but I think I perceive a visible alteration in the health of Lady Wimbleton. The roses are faded on her cheek, and she is grown very thin. Before her lord she exerts her spirits, but when he is away, they are all flown. I think he also perceives it, as he is constantly enquiring after her health. Should he lose her, I tremble for his lordship's reason, as I am certain he adores her ; and I am as certain he would think himself accessory to her death, on account of his late conduct. The least thing flurries her spirits ; she is in great anxiety about Miss Richingford, and very impatient to hear from her again.

I have not yet mentioned my brother, but he and his lady are both well ; nor want any addition to their happiness.

But

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But poor Eliza will receive a great alloy, when she perceives her sister's declining health, which I think cannot long be kept from any one. This subject has made me grave, and as Lady Wimbleton has just sent her answer to Miss Richingford's letter to enclose to you, I will delay the messenger no longer than just to assure you of my sincerest wishes for your success.

Yours,

E. WESTON.

LETTER CXIV.

Lord RAFFLE to the Hon. Lord SCAMPER.

Mead Hall:

IT does not signify, for something must be done do get your brother from hence, or we shall be undone; for though he is peremptorily refused by Sir Toby, he don't seem inclined to give the lovely Sophia

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Sophia up. I cannot wonder at it, for though Stanley was never one of us, he was always reckoned a man of gallantry, and a true knight-errant in defence of a woman. For this reason I have more to fear from him than from one of my own stamp, for were it not for her fortune, and to hinder Stanley from having her for your sake, I do think I could give her up.

She is confined by her uncle, and refused the use of pen and ink; he suffers no one to go near her but her maid, who is in our interest. I hope she will not be drove to extremities and elope with Stanley, whom I know not what to make of. He avoids me as much as possible, and seldom makes his appearance but at meal times. He sometimes talks most immoderately, and at other times scarce opens his lips; his time is mostly spent in the garden, or in his own apartment. He seldom or never mentions Miss Richingford, and when Lady Betty speaks of her

her (which she does sometimes to tease him) he starts up, darts a contemptuous look at her and me, and leaves the room. He came down to breakfast this morning, but I verily believe was not five minutes at table, when begging Lady Mead to excuse him, he mounted his horse and was out of sight in a moment.

I hope he has no scheme in hand to carry Sophia off. I believe I shall take a walk to the Abbey, and put Sir Toby on his guard, for 'faith, Scamper, for all what I have said above, I shall not like to part with her tamely. My fears may be groundless, yet if she has a mind, I dare say she may outwit her uncle.

I hope we are not deceived in her maid, for at present she is, or pretends to be, true to our interest; but yet I cannot help my fears, and should she be false to us and true to her mistress, all our wise schemes will be blown to the devil. Yet what avails all this? I don't think her of
that

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that tame timid nature that can be worried into any thing; and perhaps the more she is persuaded, the stronger will be her determination not to have me. Lady Betty, who now I believe partly gives up Stanley for lost, strives to make herself agreeable to me, and if I am deprived of Sophia, I think I shall make up to her, as her fortune will be convenient; but as to any domestic happiness, I must not expect it with her ladyship. Stanley is this moment gone up to dress; we are all in an odd situation.

. Sir Andrew don't know what to do to get rid either of Stanley or me in a decent manner. Lady Mead pities Miss Richingford, and wonders I will not give her up, that she might be released from her cruel confinement. Stanley regards us all with an evil eye; Lady Betty, disappointed in the hope of marrying your brother, is fullen and discontented; whilst I am suspicious and unhappy. I certainly
do

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do love Sophia, and would make it my study to make her a good husband, but it is all to no purpose I am afraid ; perhaps I shall add something more in the evening, so will not seal it yet. Adieu for the present.

Monday, eleven o'clock.

My thoughts, 'spite of myself, keep me waking ; I suspect, yet know not what. Stanley came down to dinner, but scarce ate or spoke till he got up from table, when he told Sir Andrew and Lady Mead he must leave them on Thursday next. He came in again to tea, and after that joined in a party at whist, with Sir Andrew, Lady Mead, and Lady Betty, and was but just gone up to his apartment when I began this. I called at the Abbey this morning, but Sir Toby was out. I must now wait with patience till your brother is gone, when after some time if

I am

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I am still rejected, I will e'en leave her
and come to town.

I will now go to bed, and try to com-
pose myself. Farewel.

ARCHER RAFFLE.

LETTER CXV.

— STANLEY, Esq. to the Hon. E. WESTON

Monday night, half past eleven.

AH! Ned, gues at the palpitatio of
my heart, when in little more than
three hours I hope to be seated by the
side of my charmer, in a chaise and four.
I can hardly believe but I am in a dream.
Your welcome packet I received by my
trusty messenger this morning, and con-
trary to my most sanguine expectations,
had an opportunity of delivering my So-
phia's immediately, by her trusty Abigail.
Her treatment has been so severe since
my

my last, that she instantly resolved to put herself under my protection.

Excuse me, my friend, but I cannot answer your's with any method. I am greatly distressed at what you tell me about the amiable Lady Wimbleton; she ought to have immediate advice, as from your account I dread a consumption.

I should not care, my friend, if you and the lively Lady Mary accompanied us in our journey; though you cannot alledge the least reason for so doing, and I cannot approve of a young lady's throwing herself into a man's arms without absolute necessity compels her. You will laugh at this perhaps, but please to recollect Miss Richingford's case is widely different. She has no father whom she disobeys, nor tender mother filled with anxiety and doubt with regard to honour. On the contrary, she only leaves an old fusty rogue, who although he knows no harm (for that he says himself) of the man she

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she has chosen, is determined to refuse him out of mere opposition to her choice : thus you see the case is widely different.

How slowly do the dull hours move on ; fear will at times take place of hope, and I dread a discovery of our plot before it is put in execution ; for after I have got her in my possession, I will not part with her but with my life. I must now lay down my pen, but shall not send this till I can assure you we are on our journey. Adieu for the present.

Tuesday morning, eight o'clock.

Just stopped to change horses and get some breakfast, therefore take the opportunity of sending this, and one enclosed to Lady Wimbleton from my lovely Sophia. She is upon the whole in tolerable spirits, though at times thoughtful, which I cannot wonder at, as the situation a young lady must be in at such a time

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a time, must be disagreeable to a delicate mind. I can say no more. Remember me to all friends sincerely.

Yours,

STANLEY.

LETTER CXVI.

Miss RICHINGFORD to LADY
WIMBLETON.

I Have taken the advice, my dear friend, contained in your letter, which entirely coincided with my own heart, and have sent to Mr. Stanley to inform him I will be ready this night to go off with him. O! my Arabella, little did I think your Sophia would be forced to take so imprudent a step; yet sure the most rigid cannot blame me. Had I the least prospect of bringing my uncle to reason, I would not take such a step. This very morning

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morning he came up and told me, I should never have my liberty till I consented to marry Lord Raffle. On my peremptorily refusing, he left the room in a passion, telling me he should take other methods to make me comply.

After this, can I have the least room for hope? I cannot commence my own mistress till of age, and six months is a long time to wait for regaining my precious liberty.

I make not the least doubt of his withholding my fortune till I do come of age; but as Mr. Stanley repeatedly tells me he has not the least thought about it, (as he cannot keep it a day after that period) I make myself content. O my dear friend, how my heart beats as the time draws nigh! My faithful Walcot attends me in my flight, and conducts me out of the house, as she has secured all the keys, for they have no suspicion but what she is in their interest against me. I

must now break off. Foolish, foolish heart, lie still. Adieu, adieu, my much loved friend, do not call me indelicate, if I say I hope this will be the last letter you will receive from

SOPHIA RICHINGFORD.

LETTER CXVII.

The Hon. LORD RAFFLE to the Hon.
LORD SCAMPER.

SCAMPER, we are undone! They are gone off, and the utmost diligence cannot overtake them. O for the power of a *Medea*, to blast their happiness. My brain is so heated, I shall scarce be able to throw my letter into any method.

My mind strangely misgave me that accursed night on which I wrote my last, yet were my senses so stupified, I had no power to watch. I went to my bed, and
contrary,

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contrary to my expectations, fell asleep immediately, and did not wake again till near five. My thoughts kept me waking, and I arose at seven, and strolled into the garden. It was a delightful morning, and I continued there till nine, the hour the family generally breakfast.

I found Lady Betty in the breakfast room, who asked me if I had seen any thing of Stanley? I answered negatively. Sir Andrew and Lady Mead now entered, and immediately sent up to Mr. Stanley; but the servant after some short absence, returned with, he was no where to be found.

Lady Betty and I both started up at once, exclaiming, "No where to be found, say you!" At that instant in rushed Sir Toby Richingford, "Where's that villain Stanley? my niece nor her confounded maid, are no where to be found." I staid for no more, but flew out of the room, and seizing my horse,

K 2

mounted

mounted him, and rode as if the devil was after me. I went to such towns as I thought most likely to hear of them; though I should first tell you, I had ordered my servant to procure a chaise and four at the first post town. I could get no tidings till I was forty miles from home, when I was informed that a gentleman and lady answering my description, had stopped to change horses between six and seven. I now too late found it in vain to pursue them, as they had almost eight hours the start of me.

I swore and ranted like a madman, and was forced to return in the same situation I set off. Oh, Scamper! judge of my feelings; I loved her by all that's sacred, nor do I think I shall ever be the man I was. It is true, I did not deserve such excellence: 'spite of the rancour of my heart I cannot but acknowledge your brother more worthy of her.

Three

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Three tedious days are now elapsed since their departure. Sir Toby is in a great rage, as he thought he had taken proper means to keep her in the Abbey. Sir Andrew and his lady are sorry they had any concern in the affair, as Stanley and I were visitants at their house, whilst Lady Betty is wrapt in fullen silence, very much hurt that her charms could not eclipse Miss Richingford's.

I must now lay down my pen, as I am far from well.

Yours,

ARCHER RAFFLE.

K 3

LETTER

LETTER CXVIII.

Mrs. STANLEY to LADY WIMBLETON.

Gretna-Green.

I Arrived at this place this morning, and our journey was so speedy, I am almost tempted to believe I came in an *air balloon*; you see, my dear, I instantly resigned my liberty, (though eloped from confinement) and be assured without the least regret. The delicacy of Mr. Stanley's behaviour throughout the whole of this disagreeable journey, is undescribable. We shall only stay a couple of days, and then set off for town, when we shall make use of your kind invitation to the Lodge, from whence Mr. Stanley and I will write to my uncle.

I wonder what they say at Mead-Hall, and if Lord Raffle is reconciled to my elopement? I make no doubt of Lady Betty being in a rage, to think I should

run

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run away with the man she had singled out for a favourite.

My dear Stanley has just been up to desire I will throw away my pen, and take a walk ; as you know, my dear, I have promised to obey, I must hasten to conclude, for I really have a desire to see the *place* I have heard so much talk of, though I never thought I should come to it on such an expedition. Mr. Stanley joins me in compliments to the agreeable party at the Lodge. I shall wait with anxious impatience till I have the pleasure of embracing your ladyship.

Yours affectionately,

SOPHIA STANLEY.

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LETTER CXIX.

The Hon. LORD SCAMPER to the Hon.
LORD RAFFLE.

COULD I have ever thought the gay
Raffle would have been thus overcome by the tyrant love! For shame, man, rouse yourself and come to town. Look into your affairs, and if you really find them so bad as you think, e'en marry Lady Betty Bolton, and if not her, some other one; for such as her are to be found every day. I had rather my wife brother had kept single to be sure; but as it is, must be content. I hope he will soon be in town, as I must some how or other get some money of him, for I have not a guinea I can call my own. I wish to clear myself, and therefore wish I could persuade my lady to give up her jointure; but I know she will not, as I
verily

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verily believe she has not cared a jot for some time past.

I wish you would come to town, as I have a thousand things to say to you. It is at present very empty, but my lady is not inclined to leave it, nor I neither, wishing to see my brother first, for I suppose he will come to town as soon as the knot is tied.

You have heard I suppose that Lord Weston is married to Miss Watson, sister to Lady Wimbleton, and there is a talk that Edward Weston is going to be married to Lady Mary Manly. I saw Ned the other day, and asked him if he had heard of Stanley lately. He answered me very coolly, No; turned upon his heel, and walked off. I hope you will answer this in person, but if not, write immediately. Farewel.

Yours,

SCAMPER.

LETTER CXX.

The Right Hon. LADY WESTON to
Miss NEWTON.

Wimbleton-Lodge.

IT is impossible to tell my dear Harriot how we miss her; your lively favourite, Lady Mary, declares she shall run away now you are gone; but as we hope to see Mrs. Stanley in a few days, we have prevailed on her to stay some time longer. My poor sister now engrosses all my thoughts; for her declining health is too apparent to be hid from any one. My lord sent for the physician yesterday, who tells us he hopes to get her well soon, as her disorder proceeds from her spirits being very much depressed: he likewise said a voyage to Lisbon would perfect her cure. She is averse to that scheme at present, but says she

she will consider of it when she has seen Mrs. Stanley.

Good heaven! what various changes does this world exhibit! Who can say I am perfectly happy? Those who are so to day, may be miserable to-morrow. A few weeks ago I hardly thought a more wretched being existed than your Eliza; when suddenly the scene changes, and a bright prospect is presented to view. All is serenity and cheerfulness for some time; when again the gloom returns, and leaves not a ray behind. Forgive me, my friend, for thus troubling you with my melancholy reflections, but the uneasiness of my mind is somewhat alleviated by thus unburthening it: my dear lord does all in his power to remove the anxiety.

If the intended voyage to Lisbon takes place, I shall write to my father and mother to come to take their leave of her. I wish to strike out some more cheerful subject for the remainder of the sheet;

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but scarce know how. We expect Mr. and Mrs. Stanley with the utmost impatience. At the sound of every carriage Mr. Weston starts up, in hope of seeing his friend. My sister assures me the sight of her dear Sophia will exhilarate her spirits immediately. Heaven send it may, but I am persuaded she is worse than she even thinks herself. Lord Wimbleton is quite in despair, and wants her to set out immediately for Lisbon, but she persists in not going till she has seen Mrs. Stanley.

Adieu, my dear Harriot; every body joins me in compliments.

ELIZA WESTON.

LETTER

LETTER CXXI.

— STANLEY, Esq. to the Hon.
JOHN HERVEY.

Wimbleton-Lodge.

I Arrived here, accompanied by my charming bride, late last night. The meeting between the two friends was very affecting, and though I had prepared my Sophia by telling her of her friend's illness, she was very much shocked, but her cheerfulness soon returned, and we had the pleasure to see Lady Wimbleton's spirits much heightened before we returned to rest. She is ordered to Lisbon, and if Sir Toby should refuse to see his niece, we propose accompanying them. I shall write to-day to the old don, and will let you know as soon as we receive an answer. Ned Weston is just the same lively fellow he always was; he has ventured to declare his sentiments for Lady Mary

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Mary Manly, but he was neither rejected nor accepted. Ned however swears he will persevere, nor leave off till he sees her in the arms of another. Should they come together they will be a most whimsical couple; but at the same time I believe a happy one.

Lady Wimbleton is very much afraid of the sea; so Ned tells her he will procure an air balloon, and waft her over while she is asleep. Nothing is talked of at present but these air balloons; and the ladies are soon to be equipped in balloon hats, caps, &c. In short, we have always something new going forward, for variety is charming.

My Sophia feels a great deal of uneasiness on account of her uncle, though she tries to conceal it both from me and her friends, but I make no doubt he will recal her to his arms, as I am certain he was very fond of her. What made him take such an antipathy to me, I cannot think,

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think, but perhaps if Lord Raffle had not been in the way, I should have stood a better chance.

We shall make a party to-morrow to my two boys, as Mrs. Stanley longs to see them, and I believe I shall take a trip to town, and call on my brother, as I hear from every quarter, how much he is distressed. I wish I could prevail on him to give up his vices, and try to retrieve his estate, in which case I would give him all the assistance he might immediately want.

I am just called to make one at a whist party, so must conclude in haste.

Yours,

STANLEY.

LETTER 2

LETTER CXXII.

LORD RAFFLE to LORD SCAMPER.

I Received yours; but till now have not had it in my power to answer it, having been confined with a cold and fore throat, which has hindered me from coming to town.

The Meads have been very obliging, and nothing has been wanting on the part of her ladyship to hasten my recovery, which is now partly effected. Lady Betty has likewise been ill; so that poor Lady Mead has had enough to do. I verily believe Lady Betty's illness proceeded from the loss of Stanley; I will not say *love*, as I am certain such an affected thing is incapable of feeling so soft a passion; for it was merely disappointment and envy that occasioned it.

Sir Andrew has just been to inform me Sir Toby Richingford has received a letter

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ter from his nephew Stanley ; he shewed it to Sir Andrew, who says it is couched in the most respectful terms ; and he further adds, the old fellow seems inclined to recal them. If this is the case, I shall not be much longer here, as I should not chuse to see your brother just now ; for I do not think myself authorised to fight him, and yet I could not tamely behold him with the lovely Sophia by his side. I am now going to dinner, when I shall make my intentions known.

Five o'clock.

Lady Betty is amazed I should so tamely put up the affront, and is very much disappointed there is to be no duel. I dare say she honours me with the appellation of coward in her own mind ; but I never approved of duelling in my life. Sir Andrew and Lady Mead commend my conduct much. I wonder if you
have

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have seen your brother? I shall leave this place to-morrow, but shall stop some time at ———, where I shall be glad to receive a line from you.

Yours,

RAFFLE.

LETTER CXXIII.

Mrs. STANLEY, to the Hon. LADY
WIMBLETON.

Richingford Abbey.

MAY I hope, my dear Arabella's health is still mending? and that she has had no relapse since I left her?

We arrived here yesterday morning by eleven o'clock, and were received by my uncle much better than I expected. He told me he could not approve of my running away, but since it was done, it could not be undone. He further told us, he was ready to give up my fortune,

as

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as soon as proper settlements could be made, as he should not think his brother's will complied with, unless he saw a settlement made adequate to my fortune. Upon this Stanley insisted on giving him a carte blanche, to be filled up as he thought proper. This my uncle at first objected to, but was forced by my generous Stanley to accept. I have the pleasure to tell you my uncle seems to like Stanley better and better every hour. This you may think, my dear, pleases me much, as it would have made me very miserable, had he not forgiven us; for this one instance of his obstinacy excepted, I have not had the least reason to censure his conduct, for though he hurt me sadly by not letting me see you, I am assured it was out of regard to me.

This morning Sir Andrew and Lady Mead came to congratulate us, not only on our nuptials, but on our reconciliation with my uncle. They behaved with great friendship;

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friendship ; but Lady Betty did not accompany them : I was sorry for that. Lord Raffle left them two days ago, and they talk of soon going to town.

The three tabbies, (as my Stanley humourously calls them) likewise came to pay their compliments, and behaved *assez bien*, except just hinting they thought matrimony had tamed me already seemingly.

I went to my dear friends the Ludlows, who received me with heartfelt satisfaction. Thus, my dear, have I given you an account of my reception, which bettered my expectation.

Stanley is writing to Mr. Weston concerning his brother, on whose account he is very much distressed, as he fears his affairs are in a bad way. I did not see Lady Scamper, but his lordship called the morning before we left town ; he paid me many compliments ; said he should wait

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wait with impatience for the honour of presenting me to his lady.

He is quite the man of fashion; but though he is the picture of Stanley in person, seems totally the reverse in disposition. Adieu, my dear friend.

SOPHIA STANLEY.

LETTER CXXIV.

—— STANLEY, Esq. to the Hon.
EDWARD WESTON.

Richingford-Abbey.

THE morning after our arrival in town I went to my brother. The porter informed me his lord was dressing; but on sending up my name, I was instantly admitted.

He seemed quite happy at seeing me, and shook my hand with the utmost cordiality, saying, "I wish you joy, Mr. Stanley;
"I hear

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"I hear you have married a very fine woman; when shall I see her?" I told him whenever he pleased. The tedious task of dressing over, he dismissed his valet. We then entered into a serious discussion of his affairs, and to my great mortification I found his debts were a great deal too large for me to think of clearing.

I gave him some advice, which I don't think was entirely thrown away; at the same time telling him, I had ten thousand pounds at his command, which I would immediately order my banker to pay to him, but with this proviso, that he would retire into the country, and think of some means to retrieve his scattered fortune.

He was much affected at this mark of my affection for him, and expressed some surprise at my being able to spare so large a sum, just as I had commenced *Benedict*.

You

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You too, my friend, may perhaps wonder, therefore will write my reply.

I was always from a boy more saving than your lordship, by which means I accumulated a large sum out of my yearly allowance, which you know as well as yours was ample. About the time of my coming of age, we lost our ever to be revered parents. You became possessed of the estate, and I of a very large sum of ready money. My expences have been very limited, and instead of my fortune being decreased, I have found it every year increased. Moreover it has been greatly augmented by the deaths of several relations, who have all most liberally remembered me in their wills. I therefore don't think I do any hurt to my wife in parting with this sum at present. But now, continued I, with a smile, I must take care of ready money to provide for younger sons, and portion my girls.

He

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He seemed truly grateful, and told me that could he prevail on his lady to retire with him for a year or two, he should hope to retrieve his affairs. I then left him, and the next morning he came to see my Sophia, with whom he was quite in raptures.

He told me his lady had peremptorily refused to retrench her expences; he hinted at a separation, which she did not seem the least averse to. I was shocked at this, and asked him if he was serious; he answered in the affirmative; for he said though he had no proofs to plead her ladyship guilty of an unlawful connection, yet he was certain that no one would wonder at his seeking a separate maintenance, as her conduct was very censurable. While he led so dissipated a life himself, he had no right to controul her; but as he now proposed to change it, no one could blame him, nor do I in the least, but sincerely hope he will

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will continue in the mind he is in at present. You may think, Ned, I was much delighted to find him so willing to leave his evil courses. He said he would look into his affairs, pay as many debts as lay in his power, and retire into the country. Whether his lady will accompany him, as yet remains a doubt. I would not speak of his boys, as I had probed too many wounds already. We took an affectionate leave of each other, and parted better friends than I have remembered us to do since our infancy.

I am quite in the good graces of Sir Toby Richingford, and he kindly says he cannot bear the thoughts of parting with us. My Sophia, who wrote yesterday to Lady Wimbleton, tells me, she gave an account of our reception. We dined yesterday with the Meads; but Lady Betty Bolton did not make her appearance till dinner was on table. She behaved with prodigious *hauteur* both to

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Mrs. Stanley and me. She is much thinner and paler, my Sophia says, but I told her the latter proceeded from her having forgot her rouge.

How is Lady Wimbleton? I suppose you are preparing for your tour to Lisbon? How do your affairs come on? Is Lady Mary more compliant, or does she still keep in her altitudes? If she is still the same, I advise you to try your aerial expedition, as by the time you descend, she may be ready to comply with your request. Fare you well, remember me to all, and believe me

Yours sincerely,

STANLEY.

LETTER

LETTER CXXV.

LADY WIMBLETON to Mrs. STANLEY.

Dover.

I Received yours the day before we set out for this place. We have had a very pleasing journey hither; to-morrow, if the wind serves, we set sail. As to your obliging enquiries after my health, I can assure you that I continue mending, and still think the journey we are taking needless. If it were not for the dread of the sea, I should feel no reluctance; how indeed could I, when I have so many dear friends about me? Lord and Lady Weston, Mr. Edward, and Lady Mary Manly accompany us. The Countess of Chorlebury was very loath to part with her daughter; but the lively Mary told her it was but a prelude to her being married; adding, then you know, mamma, we must part. This speech Weston looks

on as a good omen. He is at present quite on his good behaviour, having faithfully promised not to mention matrimony till he gets on this side the water again; as Lady Mary says, it will then be a novelty, and she shall be able to hear of it with some degree of patience. Indeed our party would have been very dull without this lively couple.

Need I tell my dear Sophia, I was delighted at the reception she met with from her uncle? As to Mr. Stanley, I am not at all surpris'd at his conduct, as his character was always noted for generosity. I am very glad Lord Raffle had left the Hall before you got to the Abbey, as the sight of him could not be agreeable.

A day or two before we left town, Lord Revel called, he is just come from Ireland, and is very much altered. He sat about an hour; my sister was present, she had never before seen him. He spoke

in

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in very high terms of Sir Henry Fortescue, and said he believed he would soon be married to an Irish lady.

Mr. Weston asked him if he did not himself think of marrying? He replied, with a smile, when he could meet with a lady to his mind he should be very ready to change his condition. Edward said he must make haste, for some of his friends talked of moving at the opening of parliament for a tax on batchelors. His lordship laughed, and told him he did not fear that tax for some years to come.

You see, my dear, I am willing to try at least to comply with your request of never sending a sheet half full, by penning the above trifles; but both trifling and interesting being now exhausted, I must by force conclude myself

Your affectionate

A. WIMBLETON.

LETTER CXXVI.

LORD RAFFLE to LORD SCAMPER.

THE conduct of your brother is at once noble, generous, and affectionate; few would have acted as he has done; and at the same time that I envy him, I know he, and he only was deserving of Sophia Richingford.

I believe I shall stay longer here than I at first intended, having accidentally stumbled on an excellent bottle companion and keen fox-hunter: he has a daughter who is a perfect amazon. She is her father's constant companion in pursuit of the chase; she is really agreeable, and nature has bestowed a very elegant form, and far from an unpleasing face. She is very tall, of a dark complexion, which I am told, and am inclined to believe, is more owing to the gross exercises she has taken than natural.

They

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They likewise tell me her mother, who is lately dead, was a very fine woman, and that she greatly esteemed your brother; you may now perhaps divine that Sir Thomas Bell is the abovementioned, as Stanley was in mourning for her ladyship, which I suppose you know. He has often spoken of Miss Bell, and said it was pity a young lady who was by nature formed to make a deserving man happy, should be so fond of masculine amusements. However, as she has a very large fortune, I have a strong inducement to offer myself, and should she accept me, I make no doubt of weaning her from her present pursuits, as she is not devoid of understanding. I am told indeed that since Lady Bell's death, she is greatly altered, and it is thought were it not for Sir Thomas, she would soon drop her hunting amusement. She as well as her father speaks very highly of Stanley, and he often says, with tears in his eyes,

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Ah!

Ah! he was a great favourite of my poor girl's, meaning his lady. They were surprised to hear he was married, and Miss Bell expressed a wish to have a description of his choice. I accordingly gave a very high character of Mrs. Stanley, though not more than she merits. She thanked me for my compliance, and said she should long to see her.

You will be surprised to find I am so ready to marry a woman of Miss Bell's stamp. That she is totally different to your sister I know perfectly well; but as all women will be alike to me after the lovely Sophia, I prefer such a one as Miss Bell far before so affected, envious, malicious a thing as Lady Betty Bolton. No one is a stronger advocate for female delicacy than myself; yet that carried to extreme, is as ridiculous as too much of the other. Thus have I endeavoured to plead an excuse for matching myself to

Miss

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Miss Bell; as it is absolutely necessary for me to think of some method to retrieve my estate, which when done, I shall strive to keep clear of incumbrances.

I now think it high time to put an end to this tedious epistle, first observing, that as I have not yet made an offer of my hand to Miss Bell, I am not sure of being accepted.

Yours, as usual,

ARCHER RAFFLE.

LETTER CXXVII.

Lord REVEL to Sir HENRY FORTESCUE.

London.

THOUGH I have been here more than a fortnight, yet this is the first leisure moment I have had to write, though I have often thought of you. But to wave all ceremony, for in my mind

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true

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true friendship requires none, I shall proceed to give you an account of my journey. You saw me set sail; my companions were disagreeable, and my passage tedious. We landed at Parkgate, where taking a chaise, I proceeded to London with all speed. Almost the first news I heard was, that Lady Wimpleton was ill, and that the family were preparing to go to Lisbon. I called at St. James's-Square the next day, and was quite shocked to observe the pale and altered looks of her ladyship. They received me in a very friendly manner, and just before my departure, I had an opportunity of seeing Lady Weston, who came in with Lady Mary Manly, and her brother-in-law. She is certainly very handsome, but in my mind wants a little of that bewitching softness so attracting in her sister; you may wonder, but please to recollect, though our taste in other

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other articles agreed, yet in point of beauty we often differed.

Mr. Weston was in high spirits as well as Lady Mary, who it is thought will be soon married to the aforesaid gentleman, but as they accompany the Wimbletons to Lisbon, suppose it will not take place till their return.

Stanley is married to a young lady who resided in Cumberland. I am told they were forced to take a trip to Gretna-Green, on account of an uncle of the lady's, who would not consent to the match, but is now perfectly reconciled. His brother's affairs are in a very bad way I hear; a separation is talked of between his lady and him, but cannot ascertain it. How do you and your fair Hibernian go on? Let me know in your next how long it will be before I may wish you joy. The town is empty, consequently dull. I believe I shall take a trip to Bath, *pour tuer le temps*. I wish I could meet with

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some agreeable woman who was inclined for matrimony, but methinks I have caught some of your indifference, and find it a difficult matter to make a choice.

The women some how or other are changed; there is none of that timidity that used to be so engaging in them, either in their words, looks, or actions; but masculine boldness is prevalent from the Countess down to the lowest rank.

Farewel; let your next be directed to Bath, where I shall be ready to receive as soon as you are disposed to send it.

Yours, as usual,

ANDREW REVEL.

ea

LETTER

LETTER CXXVIII.

LADY WIMBLETON to Mrs. STANLEY.

Calais.

WE landed at this place about five yesterday afternoon. Our passage was performed very quickly; but notwithstanding, Lady Mary, my sister, Lord Weston, and self, were so sick, we thought we must have died: my dear lord and Mr. Weston did all in their power to amuse us. But to put an end to so disagreeable a theme, let me hasten to inform my Sophia, that I really think myself mending very fast. We shall proceed to Lisbon by land, where I hope we shall have no occasion to stay long, as I shall be impatient to re-visit my native country. I wish Lady Catherine Worthy could have been prevailed on to accompany us, as the journey might have done her good.

Our,

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Our parting was affecting, and something tells me I shall never more have the pleasure of seeing her.

I have no amusing subject to entertain you with, my dear, therefore doubt not your readily excusing the shortness of this, as I must conclude myself

Your sincere and affectionate

A. WIMBLETON.

LETTER CXXIX.

— STANLEY, Esq. to the Hon.
EDWARD WESTON.

Richingford-Abbey.

I Need not tell you that both Mrs. Stanley and self were happy to hear of your safe arrival at Lisbon; ~~my~~ Lady Wimbeldon soon find benefit from the change of climate, is our sincere wish. I
had

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had a letter from Sir Thomas Bell, to congratulate me on my nuptials, with a pressing invitation from him and his daughter, to come and spend some time with them. This, however, I have declined, as we are obliged to go to town, my poor brother being dangerously ill. We set out early to-morrow morning, and I do not propose sending this till after my arrival in town. As it is now near dinner, I must conclude.

Yours,

STANLEY.

London.

My brother is in greater danger than I at first apprehended, and there are very little hopes of his life. Ah! Ned, how severely shall I feel his loss just now! He repents his faults with true contrition, has seen his children, acknowledged, and bestowed

token of his friendship, desires your acceptance of his watch, which he said would not only remind you of himself, but his failings.

I have seen all your letters, and was pleased to find that your designs on Miss Richingford proceeded from love, not interest, which (pardon a rival's suspicions) I much doubted. Your despising Lady Betty Bolton, gives me not the least surprise. Miss Bell I shall leave nameless till I have your permission to give my opinion freely, though I have no objection to become your lordship's friend and correspondent, which my brother seemed to wish. Mrs. Stanley joins with me in compliments to you, and I will trouble you to present mine to Sir Thomas and Miss Bell. I remain

Your lordship's friend, &c.

STANLEY.

LETTER

LETTER CXXII.

LORD RAFFLE to — STANLEY, ESQ.

I Would not delay a moment answering your truly friendly letter.

The papers had indeed informed me of my poor friend's death, which greatly surpris'd and shocked me. I accept of his present with thanks; it shall always be consider'd by me as a mournful memento of him.

You refuse to give your opinion of my intentions on Miss Bell, till I have accepted your proffered friendship. I can assure you it will be a great pleasure to me to obtain that friendship which it shall be my study to return. Even at the time you was my rival, I admir'd your conduct, though it was not in my power to copy it. After this your generosity to a brother who at that time but ill deserved it; your more than fatherly affection to
his

his children (all of which he informed me) made me, in spite of myself, esteem you, and the daily praises lavished on you here by Miss Bell and her father, make me almost envy you. That I did love your lady, is certain; but now that love is changed to reverence: I am certain I could never have deserved so excellent a young lady.

I shall think myself highly honoured in your friendship, and demand as a proof your real sentiments concerning Miss Bell. I have not yet tendered my hand, nor shall I till I have received an answer to this. They both join me in respectful compliments to Mrs. Stanley and yourself; and remain

Your sincere and obliged friend,

A. RAFFLE.

LETTER

LETTER CXXXII.

Mrs. STANLEY to LADY WIMBLETON.

THREE melancholy events having so quickly followed each other, have hindered me from writing to your ladyship. The day after Mr. Stanley wrote to Mr. Weston, his brother died, sincerely regretted by him, having so lately found him worthy the character of a brother. His two little boys were brought to town to receive a father's blessing; when two days after his death, the eldest was taken ill; it proved the small-pox; his brother caught the infection and in three days the two dear cherubs died, within an hour of each other. Here let me drop a tear to their remembrance. Sweet lambs! they came into the world together, nor were they divided in quitting it. Mr. Stanley was so affected at the loss of all three together,

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as it were, that for some days I trembled for his health; but I can now assure you of his perfect recovery, as well as my own; for through my fatigue (though more of mind than body) I was a little indisposed.

We propose spending a month with Sir Thomas Bell, he and his daughter having pressed us very much, Lord Raffle is there and proposes making overtures of marriage to the young lady. I hope my dear friend has received much benefit from her voyage. I imagine you will be soon coming to England, as it is getting prodigiously cold. I don't suppose we shall be in town till after Christmas, when I shall hope to meet you and the rest of your party. How is your sister and Lady Mary? When shall I have the pleasure of wishing the latter joy? I had the honour of a visit from the Countess of Chorlebury the other day;

she

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she is very well, but regrets the absence of her daughter much.

Now, my dear friend, I am under the disagreeable necessity of telling you that Lady Catherine Worthy is given over by her physicians. She begs that her sweet

young friends (as she always calls you and Lady Weston) will not grieve for her

loss; but I will give you her own words:

"Tell them, my dear Mrs. Stanley, I

"do not regret to leave this world:

"I have experienced the bitters as well

"as sweets of life. I have nothing, I

"bless God, to reproach myself with; I

"may have had peculiarities, which are

"common, you know to old maids, but

"I hope I have never carried those pecu-

"liarities to such a height as to be de-

"spised for them; no one could make

"more mirth of them (though perfectly

"innocent) than I did in my juvenile

"days; therefore when I found myself

"approaching to their degree, I deter-

"mined

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“mined to make myself as agreeable and
 “as lively as possible, in which, without
 “vanity I may say I succeeded, except
 “here and there I met with a faucy Lady
 “Mary. Apropos, now that I am speak-
 “ing of her ladyship, tell her I would
 “have her take care, and not trifle too
 “long with Mr. Weston, who I am cer-
 “tain is a very worthy young man, lest
 “she may chance to become just such
 “another as myself, for I believe, like
 “me, she will never lose her vivacity.”
 Thus you see, my dear, her ladyship’s
 spirits are the same, but as her disorder
 is intermitting it is greatly feared a relapse
 will carry her off. I will not close this
 till to-morrow, when I can better inform
 you how she is. Adieu till then.

SOPHIA STANLEY.

Her

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Her ladyship is very bad indeed; she has just taken a very affecting leave of me. She sends her affectionate love to you and Lady Weston, to your two lords, Lady Mary, and Mr. Weston. She put up an ardent prayer for all your safeties, beseeching the Almighty to shower his choicest blessings on your heads, to enlighten your minds, so as to make you useful members of this world, and to render you worthy a more blest abode. She was so kind not to forget me or Stanley, in this prayer. She further desired me to tell you, she had remembered you all in her will; and was so obliging as to give me a diamond locket with her hair, as a remembrance of her. Words were denied me, as tears choaked their passage. Then pressing my hand to her almost clay-cold lips, she desired me to leave her, as she should dedicate the rest of her time to prayer. I came home and

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M

have

LETTER

have wrote thus far ; but have just dispatched a servant to know how she is.

He is returned, and Lady Catherine is no more. Be not too much shocked my dear, at the news ; it is true you have lost an amiable friend, but remember you have two excellent parents still, whose lives are wrapt up in yours. Ah ! my Arabella, how my tears flow when I recollect the loss I sustained in my dear papa ; as to a mother's tender care, I never had the happiness to experience. But I will no more of this dull subject, but conclude myself

Your sincerely affectionate

SOPHIA STANLEY.

I forgot to mention that the Earls of Mallbrook and Wallbrook are appointed by Lady Catherine as executors to her will.

LETTER

LETTER CXXXIII.

STANLEY, Esq. to LORD RAFFLE.

I Should not so long have delayed answering your lordship's letter, had I not been prevented by the illness of my two poor nephews, which terminating in the small pox, carried them off. Mrs. Stanley, by a too close attendance on the two suffering angels, has been much indisposed, which together with an indisposition of my own, will I hope plead an excuse for my seeming neglect.

Now, my friend, for my opinion of Miss Bell. For the sake of her mother I should be sorry she should marry a man who would, should she continue her present manly avocations, treat her as she deserves. She certainly, as you say in one of your letters, is not devoid of understanding. For this reason, it behoves any man who thinks of Miss Bell for a

M 2

wife,

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wife, to study her disposition ; as indeed in my mind every one ought, let the person be of what turn of mind they will. Men have certainly different tastes. As to myself, for instance, I would not be bound to pass my days with such a woman as Lady Betty Bolton for the worth of an empire ; neither indeed should I relish one who acted as Miss Bell used to do ; but certainly, as you say of the two evils, I would chuse the latter. In short, I always wished to meet with a lady in the midway, neither a prude, or coquette ; not affected, nor yet boisterous ; not a mope, nor a continual babbler. I have certainly met with one who is an ornament to her sex, and who I am afraid has not many to match her. Yet I make no doubt you would find several amiable females among your acquaintance to pick out of, had you a little patience. But if your lordship thinks you could wean Miss Bell from some of her foibles, and
put

THE FALSE FRIENDS. 245

put up with the rest, I would advise you to address her ; for I don't think unless she has a partiality for you she would accept you, as I have heard her say she would not marry a man she did not like. She has an ample fortune, and if she inherits, but even a small share of her mother's virtues, I am certain she will in time make an agreeable wife.

I shall here leave off, begging you will deliver the enclosed to Sir Thomas, which is to inform him we intend waiting on him the latter end of next week ; till when I shall subscribe myself

Your sincere friend,

STANLEY.

M 3

LETTER

LETTER CXXXIV.

LADY WIMBLETON to Mrs. STANLEY.

Lisbon.

YOUR last affectionate letter, my dear friend, is but just come to hand, we all most sincerely condole with Mr. Stanley on the loss of his brother and the children. But the latter part afflicts me much, as I was in hopes of seeing Lady Catherine once more before she died. Her moving prayer made us all shed tears. May the Almighty grant we may all be as fit to die whenever it pleaseth him to call us, as this excellent lady.

We are preparing to quit Lisbon, as my health is thoroughly established, and I long to re-visit my native country. We shall first visit Italy, where we propose staying a few days, after which we shall embark for England as soon as possible. Remember, my dear Sophia, that you
and

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and Mr. Stanley must be of our party to Elm-Wood, where we have all promised my father and mother to spend the Christmas; therefore don't pretend to engage yourselves any where else.

I imagine before we set off for that place, Lady Mary will give her hand to Mr. Weston. I wronged her very much by ever thinking her a coquette; as her conduct since she has been abroad plainly evinced the contrary; she has met with general admiration. She has had many serious offers from some of the most distinguished of the foreign nobility, all of which she has rejected in a positive though polite manner, which though at the same time that it left them no room for hope, must heighten their esteem.

My brother-in-law, if possible, adores her more than ever, and I believe I may venture to affirm, my cousin has a very great regard for him. I shall write again, my friend, from Italy, but must deny

M 4

myself

myself the pleasure of an answer, as our stay in any place is uncertain. I remain

Your sincere friend,

A. WIMBLETON.

LETTER CXXXV.

Sir HENRY FORTESCUE to Lord REVEL.

I Received your last favour just as I was preparing for the chapel, and in less than two hours after the receipt of it, received the hand of my fair Hibernian (as your lordship calls her) at the altar.

Now let me answer yours: I am sorry you had so disagreeable a passage, though I expected no other. I am likewise sorry Lady Wimpleton is ill, or at least has been ill, as I hope by this time she is recovered. For on looking back I find I have not written since you left this place.

I have

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I am amazed at your opinion of Lady Weston, for though I perfectly remember our taste always differed in beauty, yet I thought every one must allow Eliza Watson to equal, if not surpass most of her sex. I have read in the papers the death of Lord Scamper; pray is it true? as likewise the departure of that old tabby Lady Catherine Worthy? Would to heaven she had made her exit some months sooner, as I am certain she was a very powerful enemy to me. Not but I am very well satisfied with the lady I have; and further believe she is better suited to my disposition than the timid Watson would have been.

And is there really a talk of that little virago being married to Ned Weston? Well, Ned has a good share of spirits, and 'faith so he had need, to manage such a little termigant as Lady Mary Manly. Now for the latter part of your letter

M 5

I indeed

I indeed think with you, my friend, that you have caught some of my indifference; I have a shrewd suspicion of its origin; and shall now take the liberty of telling my thoughts freely. You are certainly in love with Lady Wimbleton; nay, don't start! it is even so; your altered looks, and no less altered behaviour are a convincing proof. You never speak of her but with a kind of enthusiasm, and in your mind, no woman can come up to her. I will allow, my friend, she is a mirror of perfection; I know your thoughts perfectly well, you think the detestation you have of the crime of adultery, will be your safeguard from all harm; and I doubt it not: the most abandoned libertine must be awed in her ladyship's presence, as none can outvie her in virtue and prudence.

The late affair of the Brooks's is a plain proof of that; for this reason there is nothing to fear on her side; and I believe

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lieve from the integrity of your heart, there is nothing to fear on yours.

Now, Archer, my advice is, before she returns to England, for you to quit it; as the longer you keep near the flame, the more danger is there of your being consumed; for you know every thing, even a vice, when it becomes a fashion, is easy to follow; and as the seducing married women is at present so much the *ton*, you may notwithstanding, as I said above, the detestation you have of such a crime, be inured to it, and think with your neighbours, there is no harm in it. Thus, my friend, have I endeavoured to warn you against the danger you expose yourself to, and trust that our friendship has been of too long standing to let the above advice be deemed impertinent from

Yours sincerely,

HENRY FORTESCUE.

LETTER CXXXVI.

The Hon. EDWARD WESTON to ———
STANLEY, Esq.

December the 28th.

I Dispatch this with two others, the one for Mrs. Watfon, and the other for the Countess of Chorlebury, by a courier, to prevent your being uneasy at our not being in England so soon as expected. Don't be alarmed when I tell you Lady Wimbleton has had a relapse, so dangerous an one that her life was despaired of, though now, thank heaven, she is out of danger. The affair is too long to enter into particulars at present, suffice it to say, that the wretched Brooks's, who occasioned the relapse, are now no more. She desires I will tell her amiable friend, that as soon as she is able to write, she will pen the horrid affair,
for

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for the perusal of all her friends in England.

I am afraid we must now content ourselves here for another month, as the cold is too severe for her ladyship to think of travelling yet. The messenger waits.

Yours,

E. WESTON.

LETTER CXXXVII.

STANLEY, Esq. to the Hon.
EDWARD WESTON.

Elm-Wood, Jan. 5th.

MY dear Ned, how has your long expected epistle alarmed us! How is Lady Wimbleton? Mr. and Mrs. Watson can scarcely be prevented from setting off to convince themselves of their beloved daughter's safety; but we persuaded them to have patience till the promised account comes. When the time expired that we expected you in, we concluded

cluded you were kept by contrary winds. The Countess of Chorlebury then determined to set out for the Wood, judging you would proceed there without coming to London. At the request of Mr. and Mrs. Watson, we accompanied her, with the Earls of Wallbrook and Mallbrook to this sweet spot, where with anxious impatience we have expected you; we shall go to town in a few days, where heaven avert any thing should happen to prevent our meeting.

Lord Raffle has married Miss Bell, and they promise to be a very happy couple. My sister-in-law, Lady Scamper, is gone to visit her friend in the north, where I suppose she will as soon as she conveniently can get rid of her weeds and again become a wife.

I hear the Meads are in town; I believe I have no other news to write you, therefore subscribe myself

Yours sincerely,

STANLEY.

LETTER CXXXVIII.

LADY WIMBLETON to Mrs. STANLEY.

A Second time snatched from the jaws of death, I take up my pen to write to my friend. What have I suffered, my Sophia, since I last wrote!

I told you in that of our intention of seeing Italy; we arrived there in good health and spirits; all my former cheerfulness was returned, and I presumed to think all sorrow at an end. We went to the opera the third night after our arrival there. As I was stepping into the box, I observed Miss Brooks in the adjoining one: I turned pale at the sight of her, and instantly stepping back, could scarce keep myself from fainting.

On my telling my sister and Lady Mary the reason of my perturbation, they and my lord would have had me quit the house; but being recovered from the
surprise

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surprise the first sight of her had thrown me into, I refused, only desiring to go to another box. Would to heaven I had quitted the house, as I don't think she at that time had seen me, being in earnest discourse with a gentleman who sat by her. We had not long been seated before her eyes were directed to us, as were her brother's, who sat with another party opposite to her. I tried to appear cheerful, but a weight hung on my spirits which I could not account for.

The opera, the most tedious I was ever at, being ended, we quitted the house. My dear Wimbleton, though he generously endeavoured to dissipate my uneasiness, could not conceal his own. We therefore at supper jointly agreed to leave the place on Thursday, (this being Tuesday) which we would willingly have done on the Wednesday, but my lord, with the Westons, were unfortunately engaged
to

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to dine with a large party of English that day.

The Wednesday morning while we were at breakfast, a servant brought up a letter directed to my lord, with word that it required no answer.

His countenance underwent various changes while he was reading the note. Having perused it, he gave it to me. It was from Miss Brooks, and the purport, to beg to see him at her pallazzo in an hour's time, as she had something of consequence to impart. With my lord's permission I read it aloud, when all with one voice judged it improper he should go. After some deliberation, Mr. Weston was so obliging to offer to go himself, and demand of her after what had passed, her reasons for wanting to speak to my lord. After an hour's absence he returned, and gave us the heads of their conversation as follows: Forgetting all the modesty of her sex, she openly avowed a *tendresse* for
your

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your lordship ; and further said, she would
 stick at nothing to get her love returned.
 I tried to reason with her, but she would
 hear of none. I then took a different
 method, and to sooth, told her, that as
 you did not intend leaving this place as
 yet, I would prevail on you to see her.
 She seemed to doubt this, as she had
 heard, she said, you intended leaving it
 to-morrow. I pretended to make flight
 of this, and tried at least to persuade her
 it was a falsity, though she seemed not to
 believe it.

I was therefore afraid to ask who her
 informer was, for fear of giving her sus-
 picion, as I think her capable of the
 blackest designs.

Thus ended Mr. Weston, and you may
 be sure I had heard enough to terrify me
 out of my wits. They went about three
 o'clock, and left Lady Mary, my sister,
 and me, far from happy ; nor did they
 themselves seem to really feel the gaiety
 they

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they would endeavour to assume. Well might we feel a regret at this parting, for had it not been for the precautions of Mr. Weston, my dear Wimbleton, distracting thought ! might now have been no more.

About eight in the evening, just as my sister had prevailed on Lady Mary to give us a lesson on her guittar, we heard the cry of murder. We all stood aghast but Lady Mary, who having more presence of mind, rushed down stairs. I followed her to the stairs-head, when I heard some exclaim, 'tis Lord Wimbleton ! I heard no more, for thinking it was him that was killed, I fell lifeless on the floor.

When I recovered, I found myself on the bed, with my dear Wimbleton standing by me. Scarce could I believe my ears or sight when he assured me he was safe. At length a friendly shower of tears coming to my relief, somewhat eased me. They then told me that it was Sir William Brooks who was killed, but that
having

having on the same coloured clothes with those of my lord's, it was supposed to be him. To make as short as possible of this dreadful tale, my Sophia, I will hasten to the particulars.

The wretched Miss Brooks finding all her snares were in vain to catch the heart of my lord, determined on the shocking crime of having him assassinated. For this purpose she hired bravoës to way-lay him on his return home at night ; she gave a description of his dress to them, having watched him out ; but meeting with her brother, (who in person and dress answering the description) surrounded, and before he had time to defend himself, plunged a dagger in his heart. Two gentlemen coming up, secured one of the villains, but the other escaped. They brought Sir William to our lodgings, whom one of the servants belonging to the house also mistook for my lord ; but

Lady

guessed

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Lady Mary instantly recognized the features of Sir William.

In the mean time, Mr. Weston, (who had his private thoughts) brought his brother and Wimbleton home a quite different way. Thus were her vile schemes defeated, and she proved the murderer of her brother.

A paper was found on the wretch that was taken, which discovered who was his employer. But when she heard of the mistake, she fell into strong convulsions, in one of which in the course of an hour she expired.

Thus ended the life of this wretched brother and sister. The agony of my mind at the thoughts of the danger my husband had been in, threw me into a fever, from which it was scarce thought by any one I should recover. But thanks to God I am once more restored to life. They tell me I am yet too weak to be moved, but I long to quit a country, where

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where I have been witness to so shocking a scene.

I wish this story may serve as a warning to parents, not to give their children French educations; at least they ought to make choice of a proper convent, and not let them stay after a certain age. In short, if ever I am blest with children, they shall never, I am determined, receive a conventical education, as I think (pardon my stupidity) they can't receive a worse.

I hope to have an answer to this before I leave the place, which I hope to answer in person. Farewel, my dear Sophia, assure yourself, as well as the rest of my friends, that I am perfectly recovered, and that I long for nothing more than the pleasure of embracing you all.

Yours, affectionately,

A. WIMBLETON.

LETTER

LETTER CXXXIX.

The Right Hon. LORD REVEL to
Sir H. FORTESCUE.

THY last letter, Henry, has indeed opened my eyes. I certainly have a higher value for Lady Wimbleton, than I ought to have for another man's wife ; yet, my friend, the prevalence of a bad example should never have tempted me to try even in thought, to injure Lord Wimbleton.

I will take your advice, and quit England, if not for ever, at least for some time, but not till I have taken leave of her, and seen if her health is really restored.

I saw Stanley yesterday, who told me the Wimbleton's proposed being in England in a month or two. He further told me of the deaths of Sir William and
Miss

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Miss Brooks, referring me to a morning paper for the particulars. I instantly recollected a paragraph that mentioned a lady having hired bravoës to assassinate an English nobleman, but that the villains mistook the gentleman, and murdered her own brother; which shocked her so much that she died a few hours after.

How was I astonished when Mr. Stanley told me that Lord Wimbleton was the English nobleman, and Miss Brooks the unhappy wretch who wanted him assassinated. Good heaven! what a vile heart must this woman possess, and what is it one of her stamp is not capable of effecting! What must the angelic Lady Wimbleton have felt at such a horrid transaction. How it behoves every one, (especially a married lady) to be careful what acquaintance she makes. The only excuse I can make for Miss Brooks, was her education. Deprived of
a mo-

THE FALSE FRIENDS. 265

ther's care, she was sent to a convent, where she was entirely left to pursue the bent of her own inclinations. But to wave a subject so distressing.

First, let me wish you and your lady joy. Indeed I think with you, your present lady more suitable than Lady Weston would have been. As, should you be tempted to fly out, this lady is possessed of a spirit sufficient to tighten the reigns, and hold you in.

Who do you think is married? Lord Raffle to a Miss Bell. She is a fine woman, but rather masculine. My lord seems to have forsaken the houses in St. James's-street entirely, which is a good thing, as I believe his estate was confoundedly dipped.

Lady Catherine Worthy is dead: she is regretted by a great many. I am told she has left ten thousand pounds to each of the ladies, Wimbleton and Weston, with her jewels, of which she had an

amazing quantity ; a costly set of pearls to Lady Mary Manly, with all her plate, except a large silver cistern to the Countess of Chorlebury ; but on her demise, that also is to go to Lady Mary. These are her most distinguished bequests ; but there are numberless little legacies and presents to her acquaintance and servants. Her estate, which is considerable, together with the rest of her ready money, is divided amongst her relations, which are but few, and very distant. I think after this, you will allow that Lady Catherine had, notwithstanding some peculiarities, a great deal of sense, generosity, and judgment.

Now a word or two of Mr. Stanley, and then an end to this long epistle : He has paid a great part of his brother's debts, and cleared the estate of all incumbrances, which evinces him to be what I always thought him, a worthy man. His lady has a very large fortune,
but

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but I am confidently assured that it has not suffered in the least by what he has done for his deceased brother.

I shall after having taken leave of Lord and Lady Wimbleton, set out for Ireland, from whence, if I remain in the same mind I am in at present, I shall go abroad. Pray make my respects to your lady, and believe me

Your sincere friend,

ARCHER REVEL.

LETTER CL.

Mrs. STANLEY, to LADY WIMBLETON.

TO express the horror and surprise your last filled me with, my dear friend, is impossible. Good heaven! what an abyfs of misery have you escaped from? Ah! if a great many of our fair

N 2

country

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country women would but take warning of the dreadful end of the unhappy Miss Brooks! Well may it be said that one fault begets another; we here have a mournful proof of it. Good heaven! what must have been the anguish of her soul when she heard of the horrid mistake? Yet when I consider, I think it more astonishing that she should be shocked at any thing, when she could have the heart to wish to shed the blood of a man who had never done her an injury, but on the contrary heaped favours on her. But yet to know that her brother was plunged into eternity with all his sins upon his head, it was enough to distract her. But here let me close the scene, which already has cost my beloved friend so much uneasiness.

We spent a very agreeable month at Sir Thomas Bell's, and Miss Bell is now Lady Raffle. He at present is a most affectionate

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affectionate husband, and I sincerely hope he may continue so.

Lady Betty Bolton is married very much against the consent of her guardians, to that horrid gambler Sir Harry Newmarket. I cannot help pitying her, as she must in a very short time be miserable. I have seen her in public, but she never speaks or takes the least notice of me. 'Tis openly said, that her pique was so great on neither Mr. Stanley or Lord Raffle's offering themselves, that she determined to marry the first man that did. Poor unhappy girl, you will too soon feel the ill effects of so hasty a determination! Mr. and Mrs. Watson write by the same post to their beloved daughter, whom they long to embrace, as does your sincere friend.

SOPHIA STANLEY.

LETTER

LETTER XLI.

Mrs. STANLEY to SIR TOBY
RICHINGFORD.

London.

MY DEAR SIR,

WE had yesterday the unspeakable pleasure of embracing our dear friends, who are all in perfect health. Lady Wimbleton looks better than I have seen her since we were girls at school.

All their friends were assembled to receive them, and the affecting meeting I believe could not be equalled. Ladies Wimbleton and Weston could not refrain a tear at the remembrance of their deceased friend, who, had she been alive, would have undoubtedly been of the party.

We are now quite happy, and so my dear uncle would say was he to see us. Do, my good sir, let me prevail on you to come, you shall do just as you like ;
shall

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shall have an apartment in a very quiet part of the house; you shall never be molested with company but when quite agreeable to you: and, in fine, both Stanley and self, will do all in our power to render your stay, whether long or short, as agreeable as possible. Do, sir, consent. A few lines will be sufficient, when Stanley will instantly order his post-chaise, and bring you safely to us. You must not refuse me, my dear uncle, I have set my heart upon it, and shall be solely disappointed if you will not comply with my request.

Farewel, my dear sir, all my friends long for the pleasure of seeing you, but none more than

Your affectionate niece,

SOPHIA STANLEY.

Compliments to all at the Abbey.

LETTER

LETTER CXLII.

The Right Hon. LORD WIMBLETON
to R. RIVERS, Esq.

London.

WE arrived in this dear land of liberty, in good health and spirits, the latter end of last week. My lovely Arabella is now, thank heaven, restored to all our prayers, and looks as well and handsome as when I first became acquainted with her. Think, Bob, what a pleasure this must be to me, my whole soul shall be devoted to her. How much has she suffered! But yet I am certain she loves me with the same pure affection as when she first gave me her hand at the altar.

There are many alterations since our being abroad. My dear Arabella feels a great regret at the loss of Lady Catherine Worthy, who has most generously remem-

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remembered her in her will. My father, I am sorry to see it, is very much broke, but his spirits are yet good. I see very little, if any alteration in the Earl of Wallbrook, he seeming as hearty as ever. Mr. and Mrs. Watson, with the Countess of Chorlebury, are much the same. You have seen Stanley and his lady. Her uncle, Sir Toby Richingford, is come to town, he is a very jocular, agreeable old gentleman, and seems very fond of both nephew and niece.

Lord Revel called the other day to welcome us to England, and to take leave, as he is going abroad. His friend, Sir Henry Fortescue, is married and settled in Ireland, he told us.

Raffle seems very happy with his female fox-hunter. Lady Mary Manly is to be married next Tuesday to Mr. Weston, and your friend Hervey will in a short time become the husband of Miss Talmash, whom he saw at the Lodge.

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I think they will be a suitable couple, as both are of a serious turn. Thus you see all our friends are, or at least going to be, married. May they all prove happy is my most sincere wish, and experience all its sweets without its bitters ! We propose going down soon to *Elm-Wood*, as I do not think the town air agrees with Lady Wimbleton, where, as soon as the king's birth-day is over (which by the bye we must come to town for) most of our friends will join us, and if you are disposed to make one of the party, we shall all in general be glad to see you ; but would advise you not to bring your heart with you, as we have not, to my knowledge at least, one single lady belonging to us. Farewel and believe me

Your sincere friend,

HENRY WIMBLETON.

F I N I S.